Use of assyriology in chronological apologetics in David's Secret Demons

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The Tiglath-Pileser principle is Halpern’s cross-cultural moniker for deliberate lying or distortion in royal inscriptions that, nevertheless, conceals a kernel of historical truth, upon which he elaborates a theory of biblical composition. While acknowledging his many important contributions to ancient Near Eastern studies, I must call into question his uses of Assyriological sources in *David’s Secret Demons* and earlier invocations of his thesis\(^1\) to illustrate the Books of Samuel and Kings with an eye to establishing an early compositional date for the historiographic sources redacted in the Bible. While such methodologically-questionable gambits crop up in numerous exegetical works, the reputation that Halpern enjoys in the American biblical studies guild prompts me to call attention to an approach that bears a patina of thoroughness but fails the most basic tests of balanced historical inquiry and respect for primary resources. Items to be canvassed include Halpern’s exclusion of inner-Assyriological evidence in order to create a false picture of the reign of Tiglath-pileser I, a similar unwillingness to countenance materials from the wider ancient Near East that conflict with his thesis, and the failure to deal with the scribal reliability of particular texts, in this instance, the Kurkh Monolith of Shalmaneser III.

We begin with Halpern’s claim that “Solomon’s image conforms to the images projected by antecedent and contemporary kings in the Near East” that “[the book of] Kings portrays Solomon as a natural philosopher” and that “This presentation coincides
with the portrait of the Assyrian king in the Middle Assyrian era.”² In like manner Halpern claims the following about the Assyrian royal inscriptions: (1) the Assyrian scribes created an ideological trope of Assyrian kings as “naturalists” which began with Tiglath-pileser I and only lasted 200 years, and (2) the image more or less corresponds to historical reality, that is, “Tiglath-pileser [I] was the first king of Assyria to collect carnivores”³ and so forth.

(1) Regarding image-fashioning and royal propaganda:⁴ The assemblage of data in *David’s Secret Demons* misleads through its selectivity. A list of Middle and Neo-Assyrian kings laid next to the reigns cited by Halpern reveals a significant lack of continuity.

<table>
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<th>King Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tiglath-pileser I to Ashurbanipal⁵</td>
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<td>King</td>
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<td>Aššur-dān III</td>
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<td>Shalmaneser V</td>
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Insofar as extant inscriptive evidence represents authentic Assyrian royal initiative, the inscriptions of Tiglath-pilesēr I in the eleventh century “invent him” as the first Assyrian king to establish botanical and zoological parks in his capital city of Assur, enumerating the different species and boasting that the new stock, acquired as tribute in the course of his campaigns and on hunting expeditions, enriched the land of Assur and larded the tables of the state pantheon. Aššur-bēl-kala, his son, describes similar exploits. Following a hiatus of eleven kings and almost 200 years, the early Neo-
Assyrian king Aššur-nāṣir-pal II expanded considerably on the list of exotic flora and fauna of earlier rulers, emphasizing the formation of vast herds and orchards, his delight in plucking their fruit “like a squirrel,” and his display of this collection to the entire populous of Assyria. Only three of the 14 Assyrian kings between Tiglath-pileser I and Shalmaneser III in the late 9th century describe their hunting prowess, another parallel interest of Halpern’s, adducing numbers of wild game bagged while on campaign. Succeeding royal Assyrian inscriptions do not boast of the royal hunt.

The royal animal hunt of course continues to figure heavily in royal propaganda, not in the guise of narrative, but in palace reliefs, notably those of Sargon II and the resplendent lion hunts of Assurbanipal. Insofar as propaganda impact is concerned, the palace reliefs did not require a reading knowledge of Standard Babylonian, an accomplishment that few even in the capital cities of Assyria could claim, but instead conveyed their message to whatever parties of Assyrian dignitaries, merchants, soldiers, workman, and foreign tribute bearers penetrated into the portions of the palaces where the images were displayed. That post-9th-century royal inscriptions dealt with the theme of king as builder of exotic orchards and zoological parks is admitted without elaboration by Halpern.

What David’s Secret Demons does not examine in any depth is the signal importance that this motif, both in text and relief image, possessed for the Sargonic kings, Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, the monarchs who actually conquered the little kingdoms of Israel and Judah and left their impress on their material and political culture, unlike Tiglath-pileser I and his obscure immediate successors, battling for their lives in the Assyrian heartland.
In Sargon II’s eccentric palace, Dūr Šarrukīn, the emperor boasts that

\[ \text{kirimaḫḫa tamšīl Ḥamānī ša gimir riqqē ḫibišṭī Ḥatti inbū šadī kalıšun qerebšu ġurrušū abtanī itātuš} \]

A park, the likeness of the Amanus mountains, I created by its side, in the midst of which was collected every Syrian aromatic [tree] together with every fruit of the mountain.\(^{11}\)

Proleptic relief depictions of these garden-parks adorned the walls of his palace at Dūr Šarrukīn. The scribes of his son Sennacherib left heroic descriptions of his monumental engineering works at Nineveh, which included vast aqueducts, orchards, and hydraulic relief works in the guise of wetlands stocked with suitable game and waterfowl:

\[ \text{šadā u bīrūtu ina akkullāte parzilli ušattirma ušēšir ġarru 1\frac{1}{2} bēru qaqqaru ultu qereb Ḫusur māmē dārūti ašarša ušardā qereb šippāti šātina uṣāḥbība pattiš ina ūm ilīma qereb kirimaḫḫi karānu gimir inbī serdu u riqqē magal išmuḫū šurmēnu musukkannu naphar issē išiḫūma uṣarrišū papallum ana šupšuḫ alakti mē ša kirāti agammu ušabšīma şuṣū qerebša astil iginal šaḫē api alap qiši ina libbi umaḫšir appārāti magal išīrā iginal šamē iginal ša ašaršu rūq qu qinna iqnunma šaḫē api alap qiši urappišū talītu musukkannu šurmēnu tarbīt šippāti qān appārāti ša qereb agamme akṣīṭma ana šipri ḫiṣiḫṭī ekallāte bēlūṭīya lū ēpuš} \]

With iron pickaxes I carved a channel through mountain and valleys [extending] 1 1/2 double-hours in distance from the Khosr River and brought down its ancient waters from its place, causing them to gurgle through those orchards like canals. By command of god I made grapes (and) every kind of fruit—olive and
aromatic—flourish in that park. Cypress, “Magan-tree,” every variety of tree
grew tall and foliated (?) branches. In order to slow the flow of water through the
orchards, I established a marsh. I planted a cane-brake in its midst: herons, wild
boar, “forest-oxen” I freed therein. The marsh developed robustly; birds of the
air, heron far from their native habitat made nests. The wild boar and “forest-
oxen” produced abundant offspring. Out of the marsh I cut down “Magan-trees”
and cypresses that grew in the gardens, together with reeds from the swamp, and
everything required for work in the construction of my royal palaces.12

In terms of form-critical tradition, the apposition of the importation of exotic
timber, flora and fauna in the inscriptions of Sargon II and Sennacherib occurs in the
portions of their annals devoted to building operations,13 precisely as in the narratives of
Tiglath-pileser I, Aššur-bēl-kala, and their Neo-Assyrian successors Tukultī-Ninurta II
and Aššur-nāšir-pal II (but not in the royal inscriptions of the 10 intervening kings!).14
Assyrian royal inscriptions provide abundant evidence of short-lived narrative
experiments, plagiarism and ideological fads, but the inscriptions were only one facet of
royal self-construction. Relief images, city planning, palatial and temple architecture and
adornment, public spectacles like coronations, victory processions, booty trains, theatrical
executions and lion hunts, akītu-festivals and annual apotropaic rituals all created a
Gestalt far greater than the inscriptions alone could possibly convey.15 This ingredient is
missing in Halpern’s simplistic notion of portraiture and cultural transmission. The
figure of Solomon in Kings, underlying the exposition in David’s Secret Demons of
Assyrian zoological garden parks, may suggest an Oriental despot, but “ivory, apes, and peacocks” do not fetter him to the Tiglath-pileser I of the royal inscriptions.

(2) And as for history. The imputation that Solomon’s importing of exotics like “ivory, apes, and peacocks” represents a copycat action based on late Middle-to-early Neo-Assyrian conquest and tribute rings unsound and misleading. Mesopotamian rulers received prestigious faunal novelties as diplomatic gifts centuries before the reign of Tiglath-pileser I. Ibbi-Suen, the last king of the Ur III dynasty, received from Marḫaši a “speckled dog” of distant Meluḫḫa, probably a leopard. The Sumerian composition *The Curse of Agade* notes that “the monkeys, the elephants, the zebu, and other beasts of distant lands ran into one another in the broad streets (of Akkad),” with the contextual implication that this was due to renewed commercial contacts with distant Marḫaši. While an isolated Mohenjo-Daro seal impression found at Tell Asmar showing a crocodile, an Asian elephant and rhinoceros cannot prove that such exotics were actually kept in southern Mesopotamia at that date, an elephant’s thigh bone recovered from an Old Babylonian context in Babylon is more suggestive. Halpern, noting that “African simians were in particular demand,” cites all the passages he could muster in the RIMA volumes describing the garnering of apes as tribute and the formation of herds of these creatures in Assyrian capital menageries. However, the monkey and possibly larger simians enjoy an ancient pedigree in Mesopotamian art and texts. Terra-cotta plaques from Old Babylonian southern Mesopotamia show monkeys on leashes, playing wind-instruments, and accompanied by musicians. Monkeys figure in Sumerian literature, usually in a pejorative sense. Old Babylonian descriptions of monkeys in the guise of jewelry have been found in Ur, and El Amarna tablet 14, a letter from
Akhenaten of Egypt to Burnaburiaš of Babylon lists a silver monkey figurine as part of a bride price for a Babylonian princess. As for the antiquity of municipal gardens in Mesopotamia, Šamši-Addu I boasts of constructing a temple garden for Adad of Arrapâ, and one is mindful of the prologue to the *Gilgamesh Epic*, in which the king seigneurially claims of Uruk that “one square mile is city, one square mile is orchards, one square mile is claypits.”

Furthermore, Halpern evinces blindness to earlier examples of exotic animal collecting and the establishment of botanical and zoological parks in Bronze Age Syria and Egypt, the natural context for exploring the historicity of such practices in Iron Age Palestine. Simians were imported across the Fertile Crescent a millennium or more before Tiglath-pileser I. The image of the monkey with a tail is an exceedingly common motif in the busy iconographic fields of 2nd millennium Syrian cylinder seals, and baboons constitute one of the commonest types of Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets found in Syrian-Palestine.

If one is inclined to inflate a cryptic notice in the Book of Kings about Solomon’s import proclivities into a historical memory of a petty ruler set on imitating the surrounding Great Powers, then Egypt, and not Mesopotamia, is the power of choice. Egyptian rulers and nobles from the Old Kingdom through the Roman conquest imported exotic flora and fauna to inhabit private, palace, mortuary and temple gardens for hunting, food, pleasure, and public display. A Fifth Dynasty mortuary temple at Abusir depicts a charming group of collared and chained Syrian bears, probably imported from Byblos. An expedition of Hatshepsut to African Punt returned with hundreds of exotic plants and animals, represented in relief at her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahari, which
include baboons, green monkeys, cheetahs, and giraffes.\textsuperscript{35} Thutmose III recorded in reliefwork at Karnak 275 different plants and 52 different species of animals he had acquired while on campaign in Western Asia.\textsuperscript{36} At Qantir, the Delta residence of the Ramessid kings, traces of a menagerie or hunting park have been excavated.\textsuperscript{37} Ptolemy II founded a vast royal zoo in Alexandria, housing birds and animals from all over the known world.\textsuperscript{38} In addition to royalty, young monkeys were kept as pets in upper class houses.\textsuperscript{39} Most of the baboons and monkeys that found their way into Sargonid Assyria probably originated in Egypt or Syria. The name of a monkey-handler in a Neo-Babylonian ration list had what was probably an Egyptian name.\textsuperscript{40} Assurbanipal boasts of carrying off apes (\textit{[ba]zāti, pagiē, uqūpiē}) as booty following the sack of Thebes.\textsuperscript{41} Thus, if there was an historical Solomon who set his heart on emulating kingly menageries, the compass point to follow was southwest into Egypt, ancient sovereign and trading partner of Palestine, not eastward into Assyria.

**Tiglath-pileser I and his real-estate.** The “Tiglath Pileser Principle” stands on Halpern’s reasoning that the territorial claims of the king are wildly exaggerated, and that the king’s military obfuscations are remarkable even by Assyrian standards. Both posits fail the test. [ILLUSTRATION 1] This map, adapted from Hartmut Kühne, illustrates a conservative estimate of the geographical extent of the provinces controlled by Tiglath-pileser I.\textsuperscript{42} Koldewey excavated an archive of some 650 tablets in Assur, many of them sealed by Ezbu-lēšir, the \textit{rab gināʾe} or chief of regular sacrifices under Tiglath-pileser I. These administrative documents list receipt of provincial consignments of grain, honey, fruit, and other comestibles for the daily sacrifice at the temple of the imperial god Aššur at Assur, and go far to establishing the contours of the Middle Assyrian provincial system
in the early reign of this king. Unlike Assyrian royal inscriptions, in which maximal territorial gains glorify the image of the Great Kings in the eyes of god and subjects, these humdrum bureaucratic documents consist of exchange transactions and executive orders subject to verification and falsification through independent audits (like American tax returns), pedestrian texts without public or overt ideological value. In addition, the sites of Dūr-Aššur-ketti-līššer (Tell Bdēri), Ṭābātu (Tell Ṭābān), Šadikanni (Tell ʿAğāğa), Dūr-katlimmu (Tell Šēḥ Ḥamad), and Aššur (Qalʿat aš-Šarqāt) represent excavated settlements where Middle Assyrian inscriptions link the kings, governors or rulers by other titles to the reign of Tiglath-pileser I. I am afraid that the ancient Near East produces no more solid evidence of imperial control than the combination of centralized administrative archives and independent inscriptions found in situ.

In light of this congruence between multiple non-ideological documents, Halpern’s assertion that “interpreting such literature demands only a single rule, the Tiglath-Pileser principle,” produces cognitive dissonance. Postgate, in an essay cited by Halpern but apparently not digested, distinguishes between the areas that fell within the king’s provincial grasp, and his hunting trips and long-distance expeditions to the Mediterranean, Lake Van and Malatya, together with numerous razzias launched against Aramaean incursions along the Middle Euphrates, Mount Lebanon to Rapiqu, Tadmor, and Babylonia. If the so-called annal texts, which are replete with the king’s building enterprises in the old Assyrian heartland, are read against his descriptions of campaigns for subjugation, booty, and stock expressions of blanket political submission, then significantly more than the tendentious “kernel of truth” posited by Halpern emerges
from these inscriptions, and we are left to wonder why the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I served to inspire the “Tiglath-Pileser principle.”

Regarding gross exaggerations of numbers, what one would expect of the “Tiglath-Pileser principle” in action, Tiglath-pileser I claims to have captured 25 cities in one campaign,\(^45\) whereas the Neo-Assyrian king Šamši-Adad V boasts of 1,200, mostly in Babylonia.\(^46\) Tiglath-pileser I claims to have defeated 20,000 troops in two separate engagements,\(^47\) whereas Sennacherib boasts that he deported 208,000 people in the course of his first campaign alone.\(^48\) Tiglath-pileser I modestly asserts that he imposed a tribute of 1,200 horses and 2,000 oxen over the collective Nairi lands,\(^49\) an extensive tract of geography covering parts of Anatolia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, whereas Sennacherib baldly asserts that he drove off 800,600 sheep during that same first campaign alone, the largest number of anything cited in the royal Assyrian inscriptions.\(^50\)

If Tiglath-pileser I exaggerated the comprehensive nature of his political mastery over areas briefly overrun by his troops, his torture of reality was neither innovative nor extreme in comparison with his successors. Did Tiglath-pileser I brag that he chased Aramaeans from Sutu on the Middle Euphrates to Carchemish in one day? His predecessor Shalmaneser I submits that he himself “subdued all of the land of Uruaṭri (Uraṛtu) in three days at the feet of Aššur,”\(^51\) a feat that the American 101st Airborne Division could not pull off, smart bombs and all. Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions offer a positive embarrassment of such riches. One has only to think of Shalmaneser III’s repeated annihilations of identical Syrian defensive coalitions,\(^52\) Sennacherib’s “stunning” victory at Ḫalule, probably a military draw,\(^53\) and the pious Esarhaddon’s record in his Babylonian inscriptions of the restoration of Babylon and other Babylonian temple cities
in the course of his accession year which, using Babylonian reckoning, came to less than two weeks.²⁴ No Assyrian king, whether before or after Tiglath-pileser I, ever lost a battle in a royal inscription, and many indeed made ideologically colorful uses of numbers and real estate. The assertion that Tiglath-pileser I inaugurated the creation of major royal menageries, and that royal ideology extolling this feat and the hunt set apart his royal inscriptions within the Middle and Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptional corpus, rings hollow. There is no good reason, therefore to pin the Tiglath-Pileser principle on Tiglath-pileser I, a modest historian by comparison, save that a date immediately prior to the traditional reign of biblical David speciously suggests that the scribes of the latter could have created a royal inscription under contemporary Mesopotamia influence.

We move on from the Tiglath Pileser Principle to a methodological shortcoming in David’s Secret Demons, inattention to textual limitations. Since much of Halpern’s disquisition on David turns on historical geography, the ambiguous expression in 2 Samuel 8:3, “Hadadezer son of Rehob king of Zobah” leads him to enlist extra-biblical texts in an effort to determine whether Rehob was a dynast or a patronymic, and whether Zobah was identical with the kingdom of Rehob.²⁵ [ILLUSTRATION 2]²⁶ Among the twelve members of a coalition that engaged Shalmaneser III in 853 at Qarqar was šà ṭa-ṣa DUMU ru-ḥu-bi KUR a-ma-na-a-a, face ii line 95 of the Kurkh Monolith. While the majority of scholars have historically interpreted a-ma-na-a-a as the Transjordanian kingdom of ‘Ammôn, a minority, beginning with Emil Forrer in 1928, have understood Amana as a reference to the Amanus mountain region in Syria.²⁷ Na’aman has recently argued that this passage should be translated “Ba’aša of Beth-rehob (and) of Mount Amana” basing his theory on a possible scribal reading of Mār Ruḥubi as an eponymic
Kurkh Monolith of Shalmaneser III, ii 95a

šá mba-‘a-sa DUMU ru-ḫu-bi KUR a-ma-na-a-a
for Beth Rehob, following the pattern of *Yaua mār Ḫumri* for Jehu of Bît Ḫumri in the Black Obelisk of the same king, Shalmaneser III. Na‘aman uses other textual reconstructions in support of his notion that the kingdoms of Rehob/Beth Rehob and the southern portion of the Anti-Lebanon range, the Amanus, were geographically equivalent, arguing that the Ammonite kingdom was invariably written with geminate *m* as *bīṭ Ammana.*

To his credit, Halpern argues that the anomalous orthography of *Amanaya* in the Kurkh Monolith requires additional historical evidence for resolution. Playing devil’s advocate for Na‘aman’s reading, he adduces numerous ninth-century Akkadian examples of the pattern Royal Name X son of Royal Name Y, in which the latter is the dynastic name, only to disallow the Monolith example since, in his view, the Assyrians never use the formula Royal Name X son of Royal Name Y king of Place Name, in which “Y” means anything but the name of the king’s biological father. So, following Assyrian syntactic but not orthographic scribal convention, Halpern asserts that the Kurkh Monolith text *mḥa-‘a-sa DUMU rū-ḥu-bi KUR a-ma-na-a-a* can only mean “Ba‘aša son of Rehob king of Ammon.” Thus, the Neo-Assyrian royal name formulary followed by the Monolith scribe offsets the defective and ambiguous orthography of the Ammonite king’s name, *pace* Na‘aman.

Both scholars would have benefited from exposure to a terse essay by Rendsburg, “Baasha of Ammon.” Like Halpern, Rendsburg correctly observes that Neo-Assyrian texts wrote the name of the Transjordanian kingdom with or without initial “bīṭ.” While Assyrian scribes consistently used geminated *m* in the orthography of the kingdom of Ammon, “Amanus” was also usually written that way. The *Tübingen Atlas Index* lists
both geminated and ungeminated forms, hence the Monolith orthography remains a conundrum. Greatly to his credit, Rendsburg is cognizant of the fact that the Kurkh Monolith cannot be pressed for hairsplitting arguments over Assyrian scribal practice. Allow me to explain why Halpern’s textual hairsplitting is irrelevant.

Assyrian royal inscriptions are not created equally. The Kurkh monolith of Shalmaneser III poses a variety of textual errata and provincial features that greatly limit its use as a source for ancient Near Eastern political and military history. This fact is particularly galling for biblical specialists, because the Kurkh monolith contains information about West Semitic rulers and their military strength not duplicated in other known texts of Shalmaneser III, but the fact cannot be escaped. As the earliest published full transliteration and translation noted in 1887, and subsequent studies and collations have reinforced, the badly damaged inscription is riddled with gross scribal errors. [ILLUSTRATION 3] For example, in line five, the beginning of the king’s titulary, the initial sign šul is missing from the king’s own name, šul-man-u ašared, thus making a hash of the royal name, a serious scribal faux pas. In the oft-cited passage dealing with the battle of Qarqar, face ii lines 90-102, unique in its specificity of royal names, ethnicons, kingdoms and military statistics, I count no fewer than eight errors, including the incomprehensible end of line 99 and the complete omission of the twelfth king and his troops! Tadmor suggests that this stele represents a provincial version of the early royal annals “copied rather carelessly by some local—not very experienced—scribe.”

[ILLUSTRATION 4] The provincial nature of the stele stands out in chiaroscuro by the quality of the carving itself. The image of the king shows every evidence of an amateurish grasp of royal Neo-Assyrian anatomical and livery canons, a performance
Kurkh Monolith of Shalmaneser III, i 5a

\[\text{md} \langle \text{šùl} \rangle - \text{ma}-\text{nu}-\text{MAŠ} \]
even poorer than the Zinjirli steles of Esarhaddon: notice the bizarrely truncated, peakless turban, a neckless head perched on an impossibly broad pair of shoulders, a complete lack of waistline, and sandalled feet as long as his forearm. [ILLUSTRATION 5]

Compare the carving with the better-proportioned Kurkh Monolith of his father, Aššur-nāṣir-pal II, complete with discernable waist, proportioned head to torso, and reasonably sized feet. Two iconographic howlers grace the Kurkh Monolith of Shalmaneser III. Notice the damaged remains among the divine symbols of the lightning bolt of Adad, immediately above and to the right of the king’s raised hand—it is upside down, rather than forming a wavy V. And, at the bottom of the king’s robe, following a seam, the characteristic knotted fringe is sewn in a vertical strip but defies gravity by hanging horizontally.

The unreliable nature of the text of Shalmaneser III’s inscription is noted in a host of secondary studies. Halpern ignores them all, even though most are listed in the preface to the edition he cites, RIMA 3, Grayson’s definitive modern transcription based on competent collation. Had Halpern taken the trouble to examine the microfiche score in the back pocket of the RIMA 3 volume, he might have noted that exemplar 1, the Kurkh Monolith itself, is seriously defective, both within the concluding account of the Battle of Qarqar, and before. The orthographic and formulary arguments that he makes to “prove” that Baʿaša of the Kurkh Monolith was an Ammonite king cannot be sustained due to the multiple errata and scribal caprice in the original document.

Halpern, capable of weighing Assyriological evidence fairly, nevertheless published a poorly conceived and documented study of Middle and early Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions in David’s Secret Demons in order to bolster an early 10th-century
Kurkh Monolith of Aššur-nāṣir-pal II (BM 118883)
compositional date for parts of Samuel and I Kings. The Assyriological analysis, superficially impressive in its textual citation amplitude, should not be accepted uncritically by the biblical studies guild.


2 Halpern, David’s Secret Demons, 114-15.

3 Halpern, David’s Secret Demons, 116.


5 Table based on RIMA 1-3 and RIMB 2.

6 RIMA 2 A.0.89.2 29’-35’; A.0.89.3 7’-9’; A.0.89.7 iv 1-26 (Aššur-bēl-kala); A.0.98.1 68-72; A.0.98.2 122-127 (Aššur-dān II); A.0.101 passim (Aššur-nāṣir-pal II).


8 Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, 121, though he provides no examples.


from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh (London: British Museum Press, 1998) pls. 224-25 no. 307a (s2-4) (WAA, Or. Dr., IV 77), pls. 433-34 nos. 557-62 (WAA Or. Dr., IV 69).


Assurbanipal: Barnett, Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal, pls. 6, Room C 8-9 (BM WA 124861, BM WA 124862), 14 Room E 13(?), 5 (BM WA 118915, BM WA 118916), 15 Room E 7-8 (BM WA 118914), 23 Room H 8-9(?) (BM WA 124939), 63 Room S’ A-E (WAA Or. Dr., V 41-43, 45-46), 64 Room S’ A-E (BM WA 124920, BM WA 124922, Berlin VA 159, 969).

reportedly found that the cypress had been naturalized in Babylon through the labors of generations of Babylonian rulers; Strabo, cited in Meiggs, *Trees and Timber*, 271.


12 Text in Frahm, Einleitung, 62-63 2'-7' (81-2-4,46 = T8).


14 RIMA 2 A.0.87.1 vi 85-vii 27 (Tiglath-pileser I); A.0.89.7 iv 1-34 (Aššur-bēl-kala); A.0.100.5 134-35 (Tukulti-Ninurta II).

15 Regarding these matters, see Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Empire in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture & History of the Ancient Near East vol. 10; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002) chapter three and bibliography cited therein.


20 Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, 117.


22 Azad Hamoto, *Der Affe in der altorientalischen Kunst* (Forschungen zur Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte vol. 28; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995), *passim*.

23 Hamoto, *Affe*, figs. 61, 124, 125, 131, 145.


25 Dunham, “Monkey in the Middle,” 258 (UET 5, 295).


27 ARM 1 136:5-10; see also RIMA 1 A.0.39.1001 ii’ 8-11.


Billie Jean Collins; Handbuch der Orientalistik, Section One: The Near and Middle East vol. 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 251-70.

33 “[T]he writings of Herodotus and Ptolemy show that the kings of Babylonia kept monkeys, rhinoceros, elephants, camels, dromedaries and antelopes in captivity, and that close to their summer palaces they kept wild bulls, gazelles, deer and ibex which were hunted with dogs, lions and panthers. Most of these animals were captured in their country of origin and were transported to these menageries and parks. In order to obtain them the king either sent out expeditions or received them as tribute from the rulers of conquered nations.” Bob Mullan and Garry Marvin, Zoo Culture: The Book about Watching People Watch Animals (2nd ed.; Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 92. Royal parks were maintained beginning in 9th century China, with hundreds of specimen botanicals gathered from all corners of the empire. Marco Polo describes sixteen walled miles of a royal garden park in Shang-tu during the reign of Kublai Khan. During the late Middle Ages Chinese emperors and noblemen organized animal-collecting expeditions to India and Africa. Certain Greek temples reportedly maintained menageries. Wealthy Romans kept animals parks for hunting and display purposes, and colonial menageries constituted an important source of animals for the amphitheatres. Many royal menageries were maintained in medieval Europe, notably those of Charlemagne, Frederick II Barbarossa, and the English kings Henry I and III. Pope Leo X kept a menagerie at the Vatican. For details of these menageries and many others, including the foundations of modern Western zoos, see Mullen and Marvin, Zoo Culture, 89-115, and Gustave Loisel, Histoire des ménageries de l’antiquité à nos jours (Paris: Octave Doin et Fils/Henri Laurens, 1912), passim.

34 Houlihan, Animal World of the Pharaohs, 195-97, fig. 133.


38 Houlihan, Zoological Gardens, 533.


40 Ernst E. Weidner, “Jojachin, König von Juda, in babylonišchen Keilshrifttexten,” in Mélanges Syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud (ed. “ses amis et ses élèves”; Bibliothèque archéologique et historique vol. 30/2; Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1939) 931 and pl. 2 rev. 24 (Babylon 28122), cited in Dunham, “Monkey in the Middle,” n. 22. Although dated, see the valuable philological study in Benno Landsberger, Die Fauna des alten Mesopotamien nach der 14, Tafel der Serie ḤAR-RA-huballu (Der Abhandlungen der philologisch-historischen Klasse der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften vol. 6; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1934) 87-89 (§ 23).


44 Halpern’s. David’s Secret Demons, 126. Postgate, in an essay cited by Halpern but apparently not digested, distinguishes between the areas that fell within the king’s provincial grasp, and his hunting trips and long-distance expeditions to the Mediterraenean, Lake Van and Malatya, together with numerous razzias launched against Aramaean incursions along the Middle Euphrates, Mount Lebanon to Rapiqu, Tadmor, and Babylonia; Postgate, “Review of Die Orts- und Gewässernamen,” 100-101.

45 RIMA 2 A.0.87.1 58-63.


47 RIMA 2 A.0.87.1 v 87-89; A.0.87.2 35-36 (Qumānu).

48 De Odorico, Numbers and Quantifications, 58, 183.

49 RIMA 2 A.0.87.1 v 19-20.

50 De Odorico, Numbers and Quantifications, 58, 185. Try and imagine the biological warfare potential of a sheep herd 800,600 strong!
51 RIMA 1 A.0.77.1 39-41.
52 RIMA 3 A.0.102.2 ii 89-102; A.0.102.6 ii 19-33, 55-67; iii 1-10, 24-33; A.0.102.14 54-66, 87-89, 91-92.
55 Halpern, David’s Secret Demons, 166.
56 Adapted from Rawlinson and Smith, 3 R 8 ll.93-97.
59 Halpern, David’s Secret Demons, 179-86.
64 Adapted from Rawlinson and Smith, 3 R 7 ll.3-7.
RIMA 3 A.0.102.2 ii 89-102: ii 92, orthography of Israelite as *si*- *a*-la-*a*-a; ii 92, missing *ba*-l-*a*-a-*a*; ii 95, orthography of ‘Ammonite(?) as *a*-ma-*a*-a-*a*; ii 95, missing 12th ally and forces; ii 99, inverted DAGAL.MEŠ ÉRIN.HI.A.MEŠ-*šú*-nu; ii 99 missing *ušamqi*; ii 99 end of line incoherent; ii 100 missing *nu* from ZL.MEŠ-*šú*-nu.

Tadmor, “Que and Musri,” 144.

The image of the king shows every evidence of an amateurish grasp of royal Neo-Assyrian anatomical and livery canons: notice the bizarrely truncated, peakless turban, a neckless head perched on an impossibly broad pair of shoulders, a complete lack of waistline, and sandalled feet as long as his forearm. Compare the carving with the better-proportioned Kurkh Monolith of his father, Aššur-nāṣir-pal II (BM 118885), complete with discernable waist, proportioned head to torso, and reasonably sized feet.

British Museum photograph of BM 118883, used with permission.