

# The Cyrus Cylinder

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[. . .] his troops [. . .four] quarters of the world [. . .]<sup>1</sup> a weakling was established as ruler over his land and [. . .] a similar one he appointed over them, like Esagila he made [. . .] to Ur and the rest of the cities, a command dishonoring them [. . .] he planned daily and in enmity, he caused the daily offering to cease; he appointed [. . .] he established within the city. The worship of Marduk, king of the gods [. . .] he showed hostility toward his city daily [. . .] his people; he brought all of them to ruin through servitude without rest.<sup>2</sup>

On account of their complaints, the lords of the gods became furiously angry and left their land; the gods, who dwelt among them, left their homes, in anger over his bringing into Babylon. Marduk [. . .] to all the dwelling places, which had become ruins, and the people of Sumer and Akkad, who were like corpses [. . .] he turned and granted mercy. In all lands everywhere he searched; he looked through them and sought a righteous prince after his own heart, whom he took by the hand. He called Cyrus, king of Anshan, by name; he appointed him to lordship over the whole world.<sup>3</sup>

The land of Qutu, all the Umman-manda, he cast down at his feet. The black-headed people, whom he gave his hands to conquer, he took them in justice and righteousness. Marduk, the great lord, looked joyously on the caring for his people, on his pious works and his righteous heart.

To his city, Babylon, he caused him to go; he made him take the road to Babylon, going as a friend and companion at his side. His numerous troops, in unknown numbers, like the waters of a river, marched armed at his side. Without battle and conflict, he permitted him to enter Babylon. He spared his city, Babylon, a calamity.<sup>4</sup>

Nabonidus, the king, who did not fear him, he delivered into his hand. All the people of Babylon, Sumer, and Akkad, princes and governors, fell down before him and kissed his feet. They rejoiced in his sovereignty; their faces shone.

The lord, who by his power brings the dead to life, who amid destruction and injury had protected them, they joyously blessed him, honoring his name.

I am Cyrus, king of the world, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world, son of Cambyses, the great king, king of the city of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, the great king, king of the city of Anshan; great-grandson of Teispes, the great king, king of the city of Anshan; eternal seed of royalty whose rule Bel and Nabu love, in whose administration they rejoice in their heart. When I made my triumphal entrance into Babylon, I took up my lordly residence in the royal palace

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<sup>1</sup> The first line is missing and these lines heavily damaged.

<sup>2</sup> The text is referring to Nabunidus (Nabu-naid), King of Babylon 556 – 539 BC.

<sup>3</sup> Compare this to the proem of the *Law Code of Hammurabi*. The similarities are no coincidence. Cyrus is following a narrative formula already well known to his audience.

<sup>4</sup> Cyrus marched triumphantly into Babylon on 29 October, 539 BC. He was welcomed as a hero and saviour.

with joy and rejoicing; Marduk, the great lord, moved the noble heart of the residents of Babylon to me, while I gave daily attention to his worship.

My numerous troops marched peacefully into Babylon. In all Sumer and Akkad I permitted no enemy to enter. The needs of Babylon and of all its cities I gladly attended to. The people of Babylon [and . . .], and the shameful yoke was removed from them. Their dwellings, which had fallen, I restored. I cleared out their ruins. Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced in my pious deeds, and graciously blessed me, Cyrus, the king who worships him, and Cambyses, my own son, and all my troops, while we, before him, joyously praised his exalted godhead. All the kings dwelling in palaces, of all the quarters of the earth, from the Upper to the Lower sea<sup>5</sup> dwelling [ . . .] all the kings of the Westland dwelling in tents brought me their heavy tribute, and in Babylon kissed my feet.

From [ . . .] to Asshur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunak, Zamban, Meturnu, Deri, with the territory of the land of Qutu, the cities on the other side of the Tigris, whose sites were of ancient foundation - the gods, who resided in them, I brought back to their places, and caused them to dwell in a residence for all time, And the gods of Sumer and Akkad—whom Nabonidus, to the anger of the lord of the gods, had brought into Babylon—by the command of Marduk, the great lord, I caused them to take up their dwelling in residences that gladdened the heart. May all the gods, whom I brought into their cities, pray daily before Bêl and Nabû for long life for me, and may they speak a gracious word for me and say to Marduk, my lord, "May Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son, their [ . . .] I permitted all to dwell in peace [ . . .]

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<sup>5</sup> In the texts of the Ancient Near East, Upper is East and Lower is West.