1. EPIC

THE QUEEN OF KANESH AND THE TALE OF ZALPA (1.71)

Harry A. Hoffner, Jr.

The Queen of Kanesh

The Queen of Kanesh in the course of a single year gave birth to thirty sons. She said: "What a multitude(?)[1] [a] I have begotten!" She filled[2] (the interstices of) baskets with grease,[3] put her sons in them, and set them into the river.[4] [b] The river carried them down to the sea,[5] to the land of Zalpuwa.[6] The gods recovered the children from the sea and raised them.

After several years had passed, the queen gave birth again — (this time) to thirty daughters. These she raised herself. The sons are on their way back to Neša, driving a donkey. When they reached the city of Tamar[mara], they say: "Heat up an inner-chamber here, and the donkey will climb(?)." The men of the city replied: "Where we came,[7] a donkey [never(?)] climbs(?)." The sons said: "Where we came, a woman gives birth to [one or two] sons (at one time). Yet (our mother) begot us at one time!" The men of the city said: "Once our Queen of Kanesh[8] gave birth to thirty daughters at one time. (Her) sons had disappeared." The boys said to themselves: "We have found our mother, whom we have been seeking. Come, let us go to Neša (= Kanesh)." When they had gone to Neša, the gods made them look different(?), so that their mother [...] did not recognize them. She gave her daughters in marriage to her sons. The older sons did not recognize their sisters. But the youngest [said]: "Shall we take [th]ese our own sisters in marriage? You must not go near them. [It is certainly not] right, that [we should] sl[eep] with them. [...][9]

a Gen 25:22-23; Gen 30:11

b Exod 2

c Judg 11

When morning came, [they] wen[t] to the city of Zalpa. [...] thick bread to the Earth Goddess, the daughter of the Sungod [...] The Sungod strewed meal into her mouth [...], and she tasted it. The Sungod said: "[...] May it come about that the city of Zalpuwa prospers [...]."

When later on war broke out, [...] made peace with the grandfather of the king. [...] was the king of Zalpa, and to him in that same way [...] Allu[-... was] the chamberlain of the king of Zalpa. He put to death [...] daughter [...], and Tabarna's[10] [...] you put to death. And my daughter to/for ...[...] The [grand(?)]father of the king [went(?). Towards(?)] Zalpa, in Mt. Kapa[kapa], Alluwa died in that very defeat. [...] defeated [the allies(?) of] Zalpa. They [...] sixty houses [...] the "lord of his word(s)." And he brought them and settled them in Tawiniya. [...]ed.

Hittite King gives prince Ḫakkarpili to govern Zalpa.

The men of Zalpa heard, and they let him down from the city of [...-]pina. [...-ed] them in Ḫatti peacefully. The [grand]father of the king [...ed] the city Ḫurma to the old father of the king. [...] and Ḫatti. And the elders of Zalpa[11] [c] asked for a son from him. He [sent] them his son Ḫakkarpili.[12] [And] he instructed [him] as follows: "What separately [...] you place, in the same way [...] on

[1] Some translate this word as "monstrosity" or "bad omen." More likely it is related to Latin *vulgus* "crowd," as indicated by Hoffner 1980. Cp. Gen 25:22-23 ("two nations are in your womb") and Gen 30:11 (KJV "a troop cometh").

[2] Perhaps caulking or sealing is the idea.

[3] The Hittite word can be derived from either the word for "oil, fat, grease" or "dung." If waterproofing is intended, then "grease" is the preferred translation.

[4] The Maraššanta River (= classical Halys, Turkish Kizilirmak). The motif of setting an infant adrift in a basket on a river and its being found, raised by others, and becoming eminent has been often pointed out for Sargon and Moses (Lewis 1980). But it is often overlooked that the motive of the parent differs: the Queen of Kanesh wanted to get rid of her child. Jochebed, Moses' mother, wanted to save his life from the death decree of the Pharaoh (Exod 2). Moses' basket was placed in the reeds so that it would not flow with the Nile current.

[5] The Black Sea.

[6] Obviously, a region on the lowermost course of the Kizilirmak River, near to the coast of the Black Sea.

[7] Or: "Where we have seen," reading *a-ú-me-en* with the copy against the edition's *a-ru-me-en*.

[8] Tamarmara must have been under the control of Kanesh/Neša at this time.

[9] In the Hittite laws (§§187-200) brother-sister unions were prohibited as incest.

[10] This could be the name of a non-royal person here.

[11] Compare Judg 11. On Hittite elders see Klengel 1965.

[12] An otherwise unknown Hittite prince.

whose head [he ...s] a *tupalan*."

When Ḫakkarpili w[ent] to Zalpa, [he ...-ed] and he said to them: "The king gave this to me. He holds evil [in his heart(?)]. So make war. He sows(?) for himself [...]. So let the sword cut [...] down to the second and third generations."[13] [d] Now Kišwa said: "[...] defeated [them(?)] as far as Mt. Tapazzili. They defeated [...] So I will request a long weapon(?). Let him give [...], and indeed much." Ḫakkarpili replied: "I will request it from the king." Thus he said: "[...] we will [...], and [...] to us a weapon(?)." Kišwa came and [...]

(Continuation lost in large break in the text.)

Ḫappi and Tamnaššu Incite Zalpa to Revolt.

[...] my brother [...] was king [...] the king of the city Zi[-...] turned [...] Tamna[ššu ...] m[ade ...] king [...] a gold throne [...] this to you [...] ... [...] the gods [...]. Ḫappi [... "...] if [...] let me take [...] I will fill for you [...] with a shovel." He wrote (thus). He set out [...] and went back to Kummanni. But Zalpa made war. He went away [to/from] the city of [...] But Ḫappi [went(?)] to the city of Alḫiuta.

d 2 Sam 13-19

Ḫappi spoke to the men of Zalpa: "I am not loved by my father. I went to Ḫatti to die. Were there not 100 troops, men of Zalpa, with me? Yet they did not die."[14]

The Battle of Ḫaraḫšu.

The king (of Ḫatti) heard (about this). He set out (for Zalpa) and arrived at Ḫaraḫšu.[15] The troops of Zalpa came against him. The (Hittite) king defeated them, but Ḫappi escaped. They captured Tamnaššu alive and brought him to Ḫattuša.

The Siege and Destruction of Zalpa.

In the third year the king went and blockaded Zalpa. He remained there for two years. He demanded the extradition of Tabarna and Ḫappi, but the men of the city would not give them up. So (the Hittite troops) besieged them until they all died. The king returned to Ḫattuša to worship the gods, but he left the old king there. He went up against the city (saying) "I will become your king". Troops were with them. And he destroyed the city.

(The End)

[13] Compare the rebellious prince Ḫakkarpili with David's son Absalom (2 Sam 13-19).

[14] Ḫappi's point seems to be that the Zalpans need not be intimidated by the Hittites. Although, as a prince not in favor, he went to Ḫattuša expecting death, neither he nor his Zalpan accompaniment were harmed.

[15] On road North from Ḫattuša to Zalpa.

REFERENCES

Otten 1973; Tsevat 1983.