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Beautiful Babylon: Jewel of the Ancient World. Lost cities #1: Babylon – how war almost erased 'mankind's greatest heritage site'. Ancient Babylon: Center of Mesopotamian Civilization.





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Babylonia - HISTORY

The town of Babylon was located along the Euphrates River in present-day Iraq, about 50 miles south of Baghdad. It was founded around B. Babylon became a major military power under Amorite king Hammurabi , who ruled from to B. After Hammurabi conquered neighboring city-states, he brought much of southern and central Mesopotamia under unified Babylonian rule, creating an empire called Babylonia. Hammurabi turned Babylon into a rich, powerful and influential city. Known as the Code of Hammurabi , it helped Babylon surpass other cities in the region. Babylonia, however, was short-lived. A new line of kings established the Neo-Babylonian Empire, which lasted from B. The Neo-Babylonian Empire became the most powerful state in the world after defeating the Assyrians at Nineveh in B. The Babylonians built many beautiful and lavish buildings and preserved statues and artworks from the earlier Babylonian Empire during the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar II.

In B. The fall of Babylon was complete when the empire came under Persian control. After the Babylonian conquest of the Kingdom of Judah in the sixth century B. Some stayed, and a Jewish community flourished there for more than 2, years. Many relocated to the newly created Jewish state of Israel in the s. The city of Babylon appears in both Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Christian scriptures portray Babylon as a wicked city. Hebrew scriptures tell the story of the Babylonian exile, portraying Nebuchadnezzar as a captor. Famous accounts of Babylon in the Bible include the story of the Tower of Babel. According to the Old Testament story, humans tried to build a tower to reach the heavens. When God saw this, he destroyed the tower and scattered mankind across the Earth, making them speak many languages so they could no longer understand each other.

Some scholars believe the legendary Tower of Babel may have been inspired by a reallife ziggurat temple built to honor Marduk, the patron god of Babylon. Art and architecture flourished throughout the Babylonian Empire, especially in the capital city of Babylon, which is also famous for its impenetrable walls. Hammurabi first encircled the city with walls.

Nebuchadnezzar II further fortified the city with three rings of walls that were 40 feet tall. The Greek historian Herodotus wrote that the walls of Babylon were so thick that chariot races were held on top of them. The city inside the walls occupied an area of square miles, roughly the size of Chicago today. Nebuchadnezzar II built three major palaces, each lavishly decorated with blue and yellow glazed tiles.

He also built a number of shrines, the largest of which, called Esagil, was dedicated to Marduk. The shrine stood feet tall, nearly the size of a story office building. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, a colossal maze of terraced trees, shrubs, flowers and manmade waterfalls, are one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Yet archaeologists have turned up scant evidence of the gardens. Some researchers have uncovered evidence that suggests the hanging gardens existed, but not in Babylon — they may have actually been located in the city of Nineveh in upper Mesopotamia. The main entrance to the inner city of Babylon was called the Ishtar Gate. The portal was decorated with bright blue glazed bricks adorned with pictures of bulls, dragons and

lions. In ancient Babylon, the new year started with the spring equinox and marked the beginning of the agricultural season. After the invasion of Iraq, United States forces built a military base on the ruins of Babylon.

He describes how the formidable city walls were built of oven-baked mud bricks laid using hot bitumen for mortar, traces of which can be spotted today where the ancient walls meet the bricks laid in the kitsch, Saddam-era restoration of the s. Only after she has discharged this unpleasant duty is she set free. Herodotus ends the anecdote with a characteristically high-spirited punchline. The story of Babylon is the ebb and flow of slaughter and mercy, war and peace, a microcosm of human history. It is a tale of greed, hubris, empire and religious persecution; also of human civilisation, prodigious wealth, architectural glory and religious tolerance. The birth of human civilisation belongs to us all. I visited the site in November, just as Polish troops were preparing to hand it over to the Iraqi authorities. The late Donny George, then head of the Iraq Museum, had warned me in Baghdad about the terrible damage done to the site by the Polish military. He was aghast at reports of soldiers filling sandbags with earth containing archaeological fragments; of armoured vehicles crushing sixthcentury BC bricks on the Processional Way; of looters gouging out pieces of dragons from the Ishtar Gate; of digging, levelling, compacting and gravelling in this ancient city.

Guided by a Polish civilian with a doctorate in the archaeology of death, I walked through the Ishtar Gate in the sandalled footsteps of both Cyrus the Great and Alexander, who took Babylon in BC and BC respectively — Alexander ordered the famous ziggurat to be levelled and died before it could be reconstructed. The gaudy gate is a replica of the original, carted off by German archaeologists in, together with most of the lions in relief that once decorated the walls of the Processional Way and now stand in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. A colony of pigeons landed among the high-walled ruins to rest in the sun and shit all over history.

It was easy to be despondent. While wars routinely shape history, dispose of old powers and bring new ones to the fore, in Babylon war seemed not to have shaped history so much as to have erased it altogether. The Saddam-era restoration, anathema to professional archaeologists, had at least given Iraqis something to look at amid the forlorn mounds, ruins and piles of rubble. Ordinary Iraqis want something they can be impressed by like this. The truth is that Babylon had long ago been brought to earth, besieged by wars, weather and time. Though its most ancient ruins are virtually extinct, through its cycle of destruction and reconstruction and in our collective memory of what it means to be human, Babylon will always endure. He has lived and worked in Iraq for much of the past decade. What do you know of other lost cities throughout history? Share your stories in the comments below, or f ollow Guardian Cities on Twitter and Facebook to join in the discussion.

Lost cities Cities. Justin Marozzi. Mon 8 Aug Story of cities 3: the birth of Baghdad was a landmark for world civilisation. Read more. Lost cities 2: the search for the real Troy — 'not just one city but at least 10'.

Later, Chaldeans and Aramaeans struggle to control the city. To the 7th century A. Macedonians, Seleucids, and Sasanians control Babylon until the arrival of Islam. The site of Babylon was first identified in the s in what is now Iraq. Later excavations, undertaken by the German archaeologist Robert Koldewey in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, established that the city had been built and rebuilt several times, most notably on a lavish scale by its king, Nebuchadrezzar II reigned B.

These excavations unearthed what was to become one of the most magnificent Babylonian landmarks built by Nebuchadrezzar II: the dazzling blue Ishtar Gate, now reconstructed and on display at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. Babylon first rose to prominence in the late Bronze Age, around the beginning of the second millennium B. For the rest of the second millennium B. It was successively occupied by Hittites and Kassites; later, Chaldean tribesmen fought for dominance with another tribe, the Aramaeans from Syria a tribe that had also sparred with Israel. By B. But despite periods of stable rule, Babylon would always fall to someone else.

Given this pattern of constant conquest—Cyrus the Great in the sixth century B. The Babylonians themselves were keenly aware of the great antiquity of their civilization. Babylon reached its zenith under Nebuchadrezzar II, when its outer wall—built to the northeast of the city center, shown above—contained a total urban area of over three square miles. The king wanted its monuments to dazzle with a size and grandeur never seen before. Processional Way: This road led from the palaces to the temples. A statue of Marduk was paraded along it during the Babylonian New Year. A temple topped its six terraces. Babylon enjoyed its heyday during the seventh and sixth centuries B. A new dynasty founded by a tribe known as the Chaldeans had wrested control from the Assyrians in the early s B. The second ruler of the Chaldean line became notorious for both cruelty and opulence: Nebuchadrezzar II, the king who sacked Jerusalem and sent the captive Jews to the capital of his new and increasingly powerful regional empire.

A successful military man, Nebuchadrezzar used the wealth he garnered from other lands to rebuild and glorify Babylon. Beautification projects were on the agenda as well. The grand Processional Way was paved with limestone, temples were renovated and rebuilt, and the glorious Ishtar Gate was erected. Babylonian citizens saw their city as a paradise—the center of the world and symbol of cosmic harmony that had come into existence when its supreme divinity, the god Marduk, defeated the forces of chaos.

No ancient city was so desired and feared, so admired and denigrated. But in the Hebrew tradition, Nebuchadrezzar was a tyrant, and Babylon a torment. The king had conquered Jerusalem in the early sixth century B. The Bible says that he also stole sacred objects from the Jewish temple and took them back to Babylon to place in the temple of Marduk. In the story, Belshazzar, the successor to the throne, holds a feast served on the sacred vessels looted from Jerusalem. During the festivities a ghostly hand appears, and strange writing appears on the wall, forming the mysterious words: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. The exile Daniel is brought in by the terrified king to interpret the writing on the wall. The city would be conquered two centuries later by Alexander the Great in Although Alexander had planned to make Babylon the capital of his empire, he died before that came to pass. The great city would eventually be abandoned by his successors, and the splendors of Babylon would pass into the realm of legend.

At Babylon itself, he began a major building and reconstruction program, the city having an inner and outer wall. That was quite apart from the hundreds of street site chapels and shrines. One of the biggest shrines was named Esagil, dedicated to Marduk. Located south of a great ziggurat, George says it feet 86 meters by feet 79 m in size with gateways 30 feet 9 m high. Nebuchadnezzar II's city would have no less than three major palaces. The southern palace was 1, feet m by feet m in size. It included a throne room with a glazed brick panel showing palmettes, floral reliefs and lions.

The tiles were glazed in blue and yellow, something common among the most important structures in Nebuchadnezzar II's Babylon. The king also had a northern palace which hasn't been fully excavated and a summer palace, on the northern tip of the outer wall. It was "for use in summer when the city air was stifling and its smells at their worst," writes George. Built by Nebuchadnezzar II and named after Ishtar, a goddess of love and war, the Ishtar Gate served as the ceremonial entrance to the inner wall of Babylon, a route that ultimately leads to the ziggurat and Esagil shrine.

People passing by it in antiquity would see glazed blue and yellow bricks with alternating images of dragons and bulls carved in relief. A reconstruction of it that incorporates surviving materials is currently in the

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Vorderasiatisches Museum in Germany. Joachim Marzahn writes in a chapter of "Babylon" that the "amazing Ishtar Gate, composed of an ante-gate in the outer wall and the main gate in the larger inner wall of the city, with a 48 meter-long feet passage, was decorated with no fewer than depictions of animals according to calculations made by excavators," noting that these "pictures, of bulls and dragons, representing the holy animals of the weather god Adad and the imperial god Marduk, were placed in alternating rows.

In addition, Marzahn writes that a processional way ran through the Ishtar Gate, and for about feet m had images of lions carved in relief. The mouths of the lions are open, baring their teeth, and the manes of the creatures are finely detailed. Every spring the king, his courtiers, priests and statues of the gods traveled along the processional way, traveling to the Akitu Temple to celebrate the New Year festival.

Although largely destroyed today, in ancient times the ziggurat of Etemenanki whose name means roughly the "Temple Foundation of Heaven and Earth" would have towered over the city, located just to the north of the Esagil shrine. Like the shrine, it was dedicated to the god Marduk. The Greek writer Herodotus, who lived in the fifth century B.

He says that "in the last tower there is a great shrine; and in it stands a great and well-covered couch, and a golden table nearby. But no image has been set up in the shrine, nor does any human creature lie there for the night, except one native woman, chosen from all women by the god, as the Chaldaeans say, who are priests of this god. D Godley, through Perseus Digital Library. Herodotus may have exaggerated its size somewhat with modern-day scholars believing that it rises up seven rather than eight levels.

Also Herodotus believed it was dedicated to the god Bel rather than Marduk. Still, rebuilding the structure would have been an impressive feat and, as some scholars believe, may have inspired the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. The story reads in Genesis:. Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other. So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

That is why it was called Babel — because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth. Genesis, NIV. In, an ancient stele with an image of Nebuchadnezzar II was formally published. In it the king is shown standing beside the ziggurat. The artifact has been given the name "The Tower of Babel Stele. Scholars do not know where the Hanging Gardens were in Babylon, or even if they really existed, but ancient writers described them in detail.

The gardens are considered to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Biblical and archaeological evidence point toward the forced exile of thousands of Jews to Babylon around this time. The town of Babylon was located along the Euphrates River in present-day Iraq, about 50 miles south of Baghdad. It was founded around B.

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Some scholars believe the legendary Tower of Babel may have been inspired by a real-life ziggurat temple built to honor Marduk, the patron god of Babylon. Art and architecture flourished throughout the Babylonian Empire, especially in the capital city of Babylon, which is also famous for its impenetrable walls.

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Babylon - Wikipedia

Nebuchadnezzar II built three major palaces, each lavishly decorated with blue and yellow glazed tiles. He also built a number of shrines, the largest of which, called Esagil, was dedicated to Marduk. The shrine stood feet tall, nearly the size of a story office building. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, a colossal maze of terraced trees, shrubs, flowers and manmade waterfalls, are one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Yet archaeologists have turned up scant evidence of the gardens. Some researchers have uncovered evidence that suggests the hanging gardens existed, but not in Babylon—they may have actually been located in the city of Nineveh in upper Mesopotamia. The main entrance to the inner city of Babylon was called the Ishtar Gate.

The portal was decorated with bright blue glazed bricks adorned with pictures of bulls, dragons and lions. In ancient Babylon, the new year started with the spring equinox and marked the beginning of the agricultural season. After the invasion of Iraq, United States forces built a military base on the ruins of Babylon. The site was reopened to tourists in Babylon; Metropolitan Museum of Art. But if you see something that doesn't look right, click here to contact us! Subscribe for fascinating stories connecting the past to the present. Its history is marked by many important inventions that changed the world, including the concept The Persian Empire is the name given to a series of dynasties centered in modern-day Iran that spanned several centuries—from the sixth century B.

Sumer was an ancient civilization founded in the Mesopotamia region of the Fertile Crescent situated between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Known for their innovations in language, governance, architecture and more, Sumerians are considered the creators of civilization as Jerusalem is a city located in modern-day Israel and is considered by many to be one of the holiest places in the world. Jerusalem is a site of major significance for the three largest monotheistic religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity, and both Israel and Palestine have Petra is an ancient city that lies in present-day Jordan and dates back to the fourth century B.

Ruins of the once-great metropolis and trading center now serve as an important archeologic site and tourist attraction. Where Is Petra? Petra is located about miles south Palmyra is an ancient archaeological site located in modern-day Syria. Classical texts attribute one of the seven wonders of the world to Babylon: the Hanging Gardens; and other texts speak of the wondrous Tower of Babel. The boundaries of the property encompass the outer walls of the neo-Babylonian capital on all sides. These limits are well marked by remnants of the fortifications in the form of mounds visible on the ground and they are also confirmed by archaeological surveys. The buildings and other urban features contained within the property include all archaeological remains since the time of Hammurabi until the Hellenistic period, and specifically urbanistic and architectural products of the Neo-Babylonian period when the city was at the height of its power and glory.

These represent the complete range of attributes of the property as a unique testimony to the Neo-Babylonian civilization, and the material basis for its cultural and symbolic associations. The property suffers from a variety of threats including illegal constructions, trash dumping and burning, small-scale industrial pollution, urban encroachments and other environmental factors. At the time of inscription, and despite conservation efforts undertaken since with international collaboration, the general physical fabric of the site is in a critical condition and lacks a well-defined and programmed approach towards conservation.

Whilst the constructions of the 20th century are excluded from the property and now function as above-ground buffer zones within the property area, the future management of these within the overall property will be critical to the preservation of the fragile condition of integrity. Some physical elements of the site have been viewed as problematic in terms of authenticity, in particular the reconstructions built on archaeological foundations, which aimed at making the scanty archaeological remains better visible to visitors, and the 20th century interventions within the property.

In most cases, however, these additions are discernible from the original remains. Whilst it is a matter of debate whether these did affect the legibility of the spatial organization of the urban core, the inner and outer city limits remain discernible today and approximately 85 percent of the property is unexcavated. Authenticity of these remains is very vulnerable based on the critical state of conservation of the property. For the reconstructed sections, the authenticity of the property above-ground is problematic. While all other 20th century constructions were excluded from the property and covered by the above-ground buffer zones, the unusually high number of reconstructions and the fact that some of these were almost complete reconstructions based on very scanty

archaeological evidence remains an unfortunate part of the history of the property.

The height and design of these reconstructions is therefore based on conjecture rather than scientific or archaeological evidence. These volumetric aspects of the reconstructed monuments and the additions in successive restorations did affect the ability of parts of the property to convey authenticity in form and design with regard to these archaeological remains. Likewise, based on the introduction of new materials, these monuments illustrate limited authenticity in material and substance. The law is also concerned with surveying, excavating and documenting all archaeological sites and presenting them to the public.

At the provincial level, the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage of Babil is directly responsible to ensure the conservation, management and monitoring of the property, and works in collaboration with the Antiquity and Heritage Police who maintain a station near the site. The state of conservation of the property is very concerning and constitutes an ascertained danger in the absence of a coordinated programmed conservation approach with urgent priority interventions.

Babylonian images periodically appear on Iraqi postcards and stamps. In the s, a replica of the Ishtar Gate and a reconstruction of Ninmakh Temple were built on site. On 14 February, the Ba'athist government of Iraq under Saddam Hussein began the "Archaeological Restoration of Babylon Project": reconstructing features of the ancient city atop its ruins. These features included the Southern Palace of Nebuchandnezzar, with rooms, five courtyards, and a meter entrance arch. The project also reinforced the Processional Way, the Lion of Babylon, and an amphitheater constructed in the city's Hellenistic era. In the government minted a set of seven coins displaying iconic features of Babylon. A Babylon International Festival was held in September, and annually thereafter until excepting and, to showcase this work. Proposed reconstruction of the Hanging Gardens and the great ziggurat never took place. Hussein installed a portrait of himself and Nebuchadnezzar at the entrance to the ruins and inscribed his name on many of the bricks, in imitation of Nebuchadnezzar.

One frequent inscription reads: "This was built by Saddam Hussein, son of Nebuchadnezzar, to glorify Iraq". These bricks became sought after as collectors' items after Hussein's downfall. When the Gulf War ended, Hussein wanted to build a modern palace called Saddam Hill over some of the old ruins, in the pyramidal style of a ziggurat. In , he intended the construction of a cable car line over Babylon, but plans were halted by the invasion of Iraq. Following the invasion of Iraq , the area around Babylon came under the control of US troops, before being handed over to Polish forces in September Conway of the I Marine Expeditionary Force were criticized for building the military base "Camp Alpha", with a helipad and other facilities on ancient Babylonian ruins during the Iraq War

US forces have occupied the site for some time and have caused irreparable damage to the archaeological record. John Curtis described how parts of the archaeological site were levelled to create a landing area for helicopters, and parking lots for heavy vehicles. Curtis wrote of the occupation forces:. They caused substantial damage to the Ishtar Gate, one of the most famous monuments from antiquity [A US military spokesman claimed that engineering operations were discussed with the "head of the Babylon museum". In April , Colonel John Coleman, former Chief of Staff for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, offered to issue an apology for the damage done by military personnel under his command. However, he also claimed that the US presence had deterred far greater damage by other looters. Two museums and a library, containing replicas of artifacts and local maps and reports, were raided and destroyed.

In May, the provincial government of Babil reopened the site to tourists and over 35, people visited in Before modern archaeological excavations in Mesopotamia, the appearance of Babylon was largely a mystery, and typically envisioned by Western artists as a hybrid between ancient Egyptian, classical Greek, and contemporary Ottoman culture. Due to Babylon's historical significance as well as references to it in the Bible, the word "Babylon" in various languages has acquired a generic meaning of a large, bustling diverse city. Examples include:. In the Book of Genesis Genesis, Babel Babylon is described as founded by Nimrod along with Uruk, Akkad and perhaps Calneh—all of them in Shinar "Calneh" is now sometimes translated not as a proper name but as the phrase "all of them". Another story is given in Genesis 11, which describes a united human race, speaking one language, migrating to Shinar to establish a city and tower—the Tower of Babel.

God halts construction of the tower by scattering humanity across the earth and confusing their communication so they are unable to understand each other in the same language. Babylon appears throughout the Hebrew Bible, including several prophecies and in descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem and subsequent Babylonian captivity, most of which are found in the Book of Daniel. These include the episode of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and Belshazzar's feast. In Jewish tradition, Babylon symbolizes an oppressor against which righteous believers must struggle. Prophecies sometimes symbolically link the kings of Babylon with Lucifer. Nebuchadnezzar II, sometimes conflated with Nabonidus, appears as the foremost ruler in this narrative.

The Book of Revelation in the Christian Bible refers to Babylon many centuries after it ceased to be a major political center. The city is personified by the "Whore of Babylon", riding on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns, and drunk on the blood of the righteous. Some scholars of apocalyptic literature believe this New Testament "Babylon" to be a dysphemism for the Roman Empire.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Kingdom in ancient Mesopotamia from the 18th to 6th centuries BC, located in modern-day Iraq. It is not to be confused with Babalu. For other uses, see Babylon disambiguation. Main article: Neo-Babylonian Empire. Main article: Muslim conquest of Persia. Play media. Panoramic view of ruins in Babylon photographed in They together with the Elamites to the east had originally been prevented from taking control of the Akkadian states of southern Mesopotamia by the intervention of powerful Assyrian kings of the Old Assyrian Empire during the 21st and 20th centuries BC, intervening from northern Mesopotamia.

However, when the Assyrians turned their attention to expanding their colonies in Asia Minor, the Amorites eventually began to supplant native rulers across the region. Prolegomena and Prehistory. The Cambridge Ancient History. Vol 1 Part 1. Cambridge University Press. ISBN Archived from the original on Retrieved Retrieved 29 July Middle East Institute. David's University Press "etext. CS1 maint: bot: original URL status unknown link. See Historical urban community sizes. The Ancient Mesopotamian City. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta. Leuven: Peeters Publishers. Budge OCLC Harrison and Sons. III 9th ed. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Vorderasiatisches Museum Kleine Schriften 4, 2nd ed. In Hess, Richard S. I studied inscriptions from before the flood: ancient Near Eastern, literary, and linguistic approaches to Genesis 1— Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.

Lambert, "Babylon: Origins"; in Cancik-Kirschbaum et al. BBC Publications, pp. Lexico UK Dictionary. Oxford University Press. ISSN JSTOR Babylon as a name for other cities including Nineveh PDF. Proceedings of the 51st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale. Archived PDF from the original on 30 July Retrieved 11 April Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Retrieved 18 March Studies in the chronology and regional style of Old Babylonian Cylinder Seals. Bibliotheca Mesopotamica, Volume It was long been noted that many of Sumu-abum's year names are identical or virtually identical to the year names of Sumu-la-el, whom we know for certain was king of Babylon.

Metropolitan Museum of Art. Greenwood Publishing Group. Oxford Bible Atlas. OUP Oxford. The Ancient Orient. Babylonians, p. University of California Press. When new territory was conquered or a rebellious vassal crushed, an increased imperial presence in the trouble spot was often complemented by the removal of large numbers of the indigenous population to the imperial core, effectively breaking up the rebellious population and reducing the potential for future resistance.