CHAPTER THREE

WAR IN A NUMBER OF EXTRABIBLICAL TEXTS

In this part of our study, we shall analyze ten extrabiblical texts in a manner similar to our analysis of the six biblical war stories. We took the following criteria as our guidelines for the selection of these nine texts:

- Texts in which the theme of ‘war’ occurs.
- Texts that are (approximately) contemporary to the biblical texts that we have analyzed.
- Texts, we had thought on beforehand that they would contain both a royal and a religious (prophetic or priestly) focus.

This criteria resulted in the following selection of texts, which we will discuss in chronological order: the Stela of Mesha (± 835 B.C.), the Inscriptions of Kulamuwa (± 830 B.C.), Zakkur (± 785 B.C.), the Annals of Sennacherib (689 B.C.), some Prophecies to Esarhaddon (± 680 B.C.), the Annals of Ashurbanipal (± 645 B.C.), the Verse Account on Nabonidus (± 539 B.C.), the Cyrus Cylinder (± 535 B.C.) and at last the Esarhaddon Chronicle (± 520 B.C.).

A note on the translations given below: seeing as that the state of the texts varies, we will mark the lines and words that we are not sure of in our translation. Brackets will indicate lacunas in the text. In some cases, words or parts of words will be between brackets. These words are additions to the text, based on the part of the word that is readable, or on other hints from the text itself. If a word in the translation has been printed in italics, it means that the text of the original is readable, but we are not sure of the translation. It may be that we have to do with unknown idiom. In this case, the translation is a guess, oftentimes made by looking at the context or the etymology. Of course, we will also use footnotes to justify the manner in which we have come to a certain translation or in order to elaborate on some uncertainties. Differently than with our treatment of the biblical texts, we have added an extra paragraph to each chapter on the state of the material.
3.1. The Stela of Mesha

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**Translation**

Text edition:
- *KAI*, bd I, 33 (text nr. 181)
- *SSI*, vol. I, 74–75

Translations:
- *KAI*, bd II, 204–205
- *SSI*, vol. I, 75–77
- K.A.D. Smelik in: *COS*, vol. II, 137–138
- K. Galling, *Textbuch zur Geschichte Israels*, Tübingen 1968\(^2\), 51–53

(1) I am Mesha,\(^1\) son of Kemosh-[yatti],\(^2\) the king of Moab, the Dibonite.
(2) My father was king over Moab for thirty years, and I, I was king \(^3\) after my father.

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\(^1\) Here, we are abiding by the generally accepted custom of calling this king ‘Mesha’, as in the Masoretic text of 2 Kgs 3, among others. The other assumption scholars sometimes make is that his name is in reality pronounced as ‘Moša’ (LXX for example also has Μοσά) or ‘Mošia’. This name derives from the meaningful stem פּוֹשׁ/פוֹשׁ ‘to deliver’. E. Lipiński, “Etymological and Exegetical Notes on the Meša’ Inscription”, *Or* 40 (1971), 325–340, regards this as a nomen-omen, “expressing the wish of Meša’s parents that the newborn heir to the throne will be the means in the hand of the national god to bring salvation from the Omride’s yoke.” (326).

\(^2\) The second part of the name of Mesha’s father is illegible but can be completed on the basis of another discovery in the text. See W.L. Reed en F.V. Winnett, “A Fragment of an Early Moabite Inscription from Kerak”, *RASOR* 172 (1963), 1–9.