Miscellaneous Babylonian Texts concerning the Moon

This passage is from the *Enûma Eliš* (also called the Babylonian *Genesis*), written in the middle of the second millennium BC. It tells how Marduk, the chief of all the gods, established order in the heavens after his victory over Tiamat and her allies, the gods of chaos.

. . . Then Marduk created places for the Great Gods.
He set up their likenesses in the constellations.
He fixed the year and defined its divisions;
Setting up three constellations for each of the twelve months.
When he had defined the days of the year by the constellations,
He set up the station of Nibiru [the Zodiac] as a measure of them all,
That none might be too long or too short . . . .
He caused the Moon to shine forth; and put the night under her command.
He appointed her to dwell in the night and mark out the time;
Month after month unceasingly he caused her disc to grow.
"At the beginning of the month, as you rise over the land,
You shall shine as a horned crescent for six days;
And with half a disc on the seventh day.
At the full moon you shall stand in opposition to the Sun, in the middle of each month.
When the Sun has overtaken you on the eastern horizon,
you shall shrink and shape your crescent backwards.
As invisibility approaches, draw near to the path of the Sun.
And on the twenty-ninth day you shall stand in line with the Sun a second time."

*Astrological Reports to the Assyrian Kings,* ca. 700 BC. The scribes, whose names appear before each report, quote in these reports from a collection of omens that was first compiled in the second millennium BC. The reports selected here concern the day on which the full moon is seen in the morning opposite the Sun.

**SAA 8 - 88  Full moon on 12th Day  (Balasî, n.d.)**

If the Moon is seen at an inappropriate time: business will diminish.
-- on the 12th day it was seen with the Sun,
If the Moon and Sun are seen together not at the normal time: a strong enemy will oppress the land; the king of Akkad will bring about the downfall of his enemy.
-- On the 12th day it was seen with the Sun.

If the Moon is seen on the 12th day: bad for Akkad, it is good for Elam and the Westland.

SAA 8 - 266 Full moon on 13th Day (Nergal-etir, n.d.)

If on the 13th day the Moon and Sun are seen together: unreliable speech; the way of the land will not be straight; there will be footsteps of the enemy; the enemy will take away booty in the land.

SAA 8 - 17 Full moon on the 14th Day (Issar-šumu-ereš, n.d.)

If on the 14th day the Moon and Sun are seen together: speech will become reliable; the land will become happy; the gods will remember the land favorably; joy among the troops; the king will become happy; the cattle of the land will lie in the steppe undisturbed.
If the Moon and Sun are in balance: the land will become stable; reliable speech will be placed in the mouth of the people; the king will make his throne last long.
If the Moon and Sun are in opposition: the king will widen his understanding.

SAA 8 - 294 Full moon on the 14th day (Nabû-iqiša of Borsippa, n.d.)

If on the 14th day the Moon and Sun are seen together: the speech of the land will become happy; the king will become happy; the gods will remember Akkad favorably; there will be joy among people; the cattle of Akkad will lie in the steppe undisturbed.
The Moon is seen on the 14th day: good for Akkad, bad for Elam and the Westland.
The king my lord must not say as follows: "there were clouds; how did you see anything?" This night, when I saw the Moon's coming out, it came out when little of the day was left, it reached the region where it will be seen in opposition with the Sun. This is a sign that it is to be observed. In the morning, if the day is cloudless, the king will see: for one "double-hour" of daytime the Moon will stand there with the Sun.

SAA 8 - 24 Full moon on 15th Day (Issar-šumu-ereš, n.d.)

If on the 15th day the Moon and Sun are seen together: a strong enemy will raise his weapons against the land; the enemy will tear down the city gates.
If the Moon does not wait for the Sun but sets: raging of lion and wolf.

SAA 8 - 295 Full Moon on 15th Day (Nabû-iqiša of Borsippa, n.d.)

If the Moon does not wait for the Sun but sets: raging of lions and wolves. I.e., on the 14th day one god is not seen with the other.
If at the appearance of the Moon one horn passes the other: hostility will take place.  
If the Moon is fast in its course: business will diminish. -- On the 15th day it will be 
seen with the Sun.

SAA 8 - 25 Full moon on 16th Day (Issar-šumu-ereš, n.d.)

If the Moon in Nisan [the first month] is seen with the Sun neither on the 14th nor on 
the 15th day: campaigning troops of the enemy will make a razzia into the 
land and . . . the land; there will be an uprising in the land.
If on the 16th day the Moon and Sun are seen together: one king will send hostile 
messages to another; the king will be shut up in his palace; the step of the 
enemy will be set towards his land; the enemy will march around victoriously 
in his land.
If on the 16th day the Moon and Sun are seen together: the king of Subartu will 
become strong and have no rival.

SAA 8 - 102 . . . Full moon on 16th Day (Akkullanu, 669 BC, Mar. 15)

Observation of the Moon which was seen on the 16th day together with the Sun. 
The 16th day refers to Subartu . . . but in truth, it is a bad omen for Akkad.
If the Moon becomes late at an inappropriate time and is not seen: attack of a ruling 
city . . .
If on the 16th day the Moon and Sun are seen together: the king will be shut up in his 
palace for the length of a month; the step of the enemy will be set towards his 
land; the enemy will march around victoriously in his land.

A ritual to cure illnesses caused by a ghost. Note particularly the time of this ritual and its 
relationship to the appearance of the Sun and the Moon.

If a man continually has headaches, his ears ring, his eyes become filmy, his 
neck muscles continually hurt him, his arms are continually paralyzed, the small of his 
back gives him a piercing pain, his stomach is upset, his feet are continually limp: a 
pursuing ghost follows that man.
To cure him, on the fifteenth, the day when Sîn [the Moon] and Šamaš [the 
Sun] stand together, you dress that man in sackcloth. You make an incision in his 
temple with a flint knife and draw his blood. You have him sit in a reed hut. You 
have him face north. To Sîn, towards the place of sunset, you set up a censer burning 
juniper. You make a libation of cow’s milk. Towards the rising Sun, you set up a 
censer burning cypress. You pour out a libation of first quality beer.
That man says as follows: "To my left is Sîn, moon crescent of the great 
heavens, to my right the father of mankind, Šamaš the judge. Both gods, fathers of 
the great gods, makers of decisions for the widespread people, an evil wind has blown 
upon me and a pursuing ghost keeps following me. I am truly grieved, confused and
troubled. <I kneel? > for your judgement; save me so that I may not be wronged . . . .
Sîn, light of heaven and earth, take away my sickness! . . . Šamaš, great judge, father
of mankind, let the evil wind that has settled on me rise to heaven like smoke, and I
will sing your praises.”

A Babylonian "horoscope." Birth horoscopes, which deal with the fate of individuals, first appear in
the fifth century BC, long after the texts we have already seen.

[The month] Nissanu, night of the 14th, son of Šumu-usur, son of Šumu-iddina,
descendant of Dēkē, was born.
At that time, the Moon was below the pincer of the Scorpion, Jupiter in Pisces, Venus
in Taurus, Saturn in Cancer, Mars in Gemini, Mercury, which had set, was not
visible.
Nissanu 1, duration of visibility of the new crescent was 28 time degrees [i.e., 1 hr,
36 minutes], visibility of the Moon after sunrise on the 14th was 4,40 time
degrees [18 min, 40 seconds]. The last visibility of the lunar crescent was the
27th.

---

Chicago, 1988, pp. 238-240; Erica Reiner, Astral Magic in Babylonia, Transactions of the American

4. Francesca Rochberg, Babylonian Horoscopes, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 88, 1,