The Assyrian campaign

1 In the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled the Assyrians from his great city of Nineveh, Arphaxad was ruling the Medes from Icbatan. 2 Arphaxad encircled Icbatan with a wall built of hewn stones, each four and a half feet thick and nine feet long. He made the wall a hundred and five feet high and seventy-five feet thick; 3 and at the city gates he set up towers a hundred and fifty feet high with foundations ninety feet thick; 4 the gates themselves he made a hundred and five feet high, and he made them sixty feet wide to allow his army to march out in full force with the infantry in formation. 5 It was in those days, then, that King Nebuchadnezzar waged war against King Arphaxad in the great plain on the borders of Ragau. 6 All the inhabitants of the hill-country, all who lived along the Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Hydaspes, and, on the plain, King Arioch of Elam, these rallied to Nebuchadnezzar; and many tribes of the Chelodites joined forces with them.

7 King Nebuchadnezzar of Assyria sent a summons to all the inhabitants of Persia, and to all who lived in the west: the inhabitants of Cilicia and Damascus, Lebanon and Antilebanon, all who lived along the coast, 8 the peoples in Carmel and Gilead, Upper Galilee, and the great plain of Edraelon, 9 all who were in Samaria and its towns, and those to the west of the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, Betane, Chelus, Kadesh, and the wadi of Egypt, those who lived in Tahpanhes, Rameses, and the whole land of Goshen 10 as far as Tanis and Memphis, and all the inhabitants of Egypt as far as the borders of Ethiopia. 11 But the king’s summons was flouted by the entire region, and they did not join him for the campaign. They were not afraid of him; they regarded him as a mere man and, treating his envoys with contempt, they sent them back empty-handed.

12 This roused Nebuchadnezzar to fury against the whole region; he swore by his throne and kingdom to exact vengeance from all the territories of Cilicia, Damascus, and Syria, and to put their inhabitants to the sword, along with the Moabites, the Ammonites, the people throughout Judaea, and everyone in Egypt, the whole region within the limits of the two seas.

13 In the seventeenth year of his reign he marshalled his forces against King Arphaxad and defeated him in battle, with the complete rout of his army, all his cavalry and chariots. 14 He occupied his towns, and advancing on Icbatan he captured its towers, looted the bazaars, and reduced its splendour to abject ruin. 15 He caught Arphaxad in the mountains of Ragau and ran him through with his spear, and so made an end of him. 16 Then he and his combined forces, an immense host of warriors, went back with the spoil to Nineveh, where for four months he relaxed and feasted with his army.

2 In the eighteenth year, on the twenty-second day of the first month, there was a conference in King Nebuchadnezzar’s palace about implementing his threat of vengeance on the whole region. 2 Calling together all his officers and nobles, the king laid before them his secret plan for the region and declared his determination to put an end to the disaffection. 3 It was resolved by them that everyone who had not obeyed the king’s summons should die.

4 When his plans were completed, King Nebuchadnezzar of Assyria summoned his commander-in-chief Holophernes, who was second only to himself, and said, 5 ‘This is the decree of the Great King, lord of all the earth: Directly you leave my presence, you are to take under your command an army of seasoned troops, a hundred and twenty thousand infantry with a force of twelve thousand cavalry, 6 and march against all the peoples of the west who have dared to disobey the order I issued. 7 Bid them have earth and water ready in token of submission, for I am coming to vent my wrath on them. Every corner of

1:15 made an end of him: prob. rdg; Gk adds up to that day.