



This tile picture of a bull, from the Ishtar Gate, represents the weather god Adad.

BABYLON REBORN

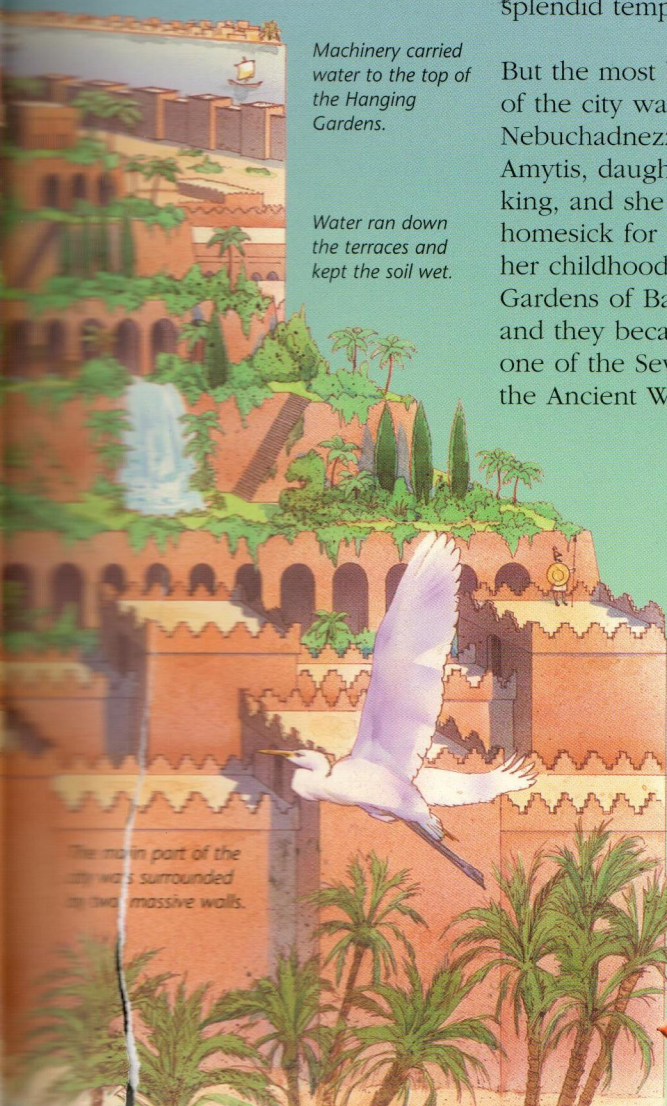
Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar II, made Babylon great again. They founded a new ('Neo') Babylonian empire, restored Babylon's influence in the region, and encouraged a revival of religion and culture.

The kings rebuilt Babylon in lavish style, making it one of the most spectacular cities ever seen. It was surrounded by towering walls with huge gates, and there were also splendid temples and palaces.

But the most breathtaking part of the city was the gardens. Nebuchadnezzar II married Amytis, daughter of the Median king, and she became homesick for the green hills of her childhood. So the Hanging Gardens of Babylon were built, and they became famous as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Machinery carried water to the top of the Hanging Gardens.

Water ran down the terraces and kept the soil wet.

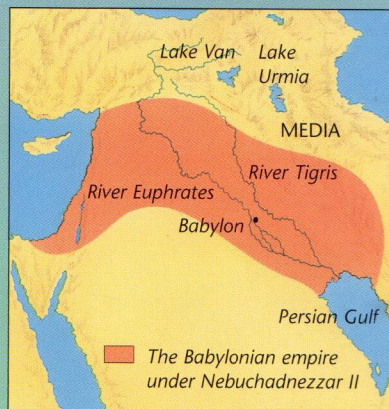


The main part of the city was surrounded by two massive walls.

THE NEW EMPIRE

Nebuchadnezzar conquered most of the old Assyrian empire for Babylon. But some peoples were unwilling to be ruled by another foreign power, and rebellions broke out.

After a revolt in 587BC, Babylon's armies launched a ferocious assault on the city of Jerusalem, tearing down the walls and burning down the Temple. Thousands of Jews were carried off to Babylon.



Map showing the Babylonian empire at the time of Nebuchadnezzar II.

THE MYSTERY OF NABONIDUS

The last king of the Neo-Babylonian empire was called Nabonidus. He was an eccentric man, and some of his enemies claimed he was insane. When a famine hit Babylon, Nabonidus left the city and fled into the desert. He stayed away for ten years, and nobody is sure why.

By the time Nabonidus returned, it was all over. The Persians had been growing in strength, and in 539BC they took control of Babylon. But they treated the Babylonians with respect, unlike previous foreign rulers, and they were welcomed into the city.