

The Richest Man in Babylon Study Guide

The Richest Man in Babylon by George Samuel Clason

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Plot Summary

George S. Clason presents a series of stories about the ancient Babylonians that are meant to teach the reader lessons about personal finance. The stories begin with that of Bansir, who is a chariot maker struggling to provide the luxuries his family desires. Each chapter then builds upon this initial story, reiterating past lessons and introducing new ones so that the reader is able to gain a gradual understanding of how to manage their personal finances based on simple principles.

Clason's structuring of the stories allows the reader to gradually work through the basic tenets of Babylonian finance. The author begins slowly by presenting a character that the reader can easily identify with, Bansir. Bansir is a man who works hard at his job but still feels that he is not earning as much as he would like too and wishes to be able to buy the finer wares in the marketplace for his family. Bansir's problem is that he does not know how to alter his station in life when he makes a fixed income and must care for his family from that amount. Bansir is wise enough to seek the advice of a friend who has achieved the exact thing to which Bansir aspires.

Arkad was once a menial laborer like Bansir but with determination and perseverance he has been able to improve his station in life until he holds the title of the richest man in Babylon. Arkad willingly tells Bansir the secret of his success although he tells him that the piece of advice alone is not enough to make Bansir wealthy. Bansir will have to learn how to apply the advice if he is to have enough to live the type of life he desires. The foundational building block for those desiring to increase their wealth is this: part of everything you earn is yours to keep. Arkad tells Bansir that this means he should pay himself at least one-tenth of all he earns before paying his debts. In this way Bansir will be able to begin saving some of his money. From this basic piece of advice all the other principles of Babylonian finance grow.

Subsequent chapters relate how one can cure a lean purse. Arkad again is the dispenser of this wisdom as he spends seven days explaining the seven cures for a lean purse. The first cure is the original bit of wisdom passed on to Bansir: saving one-tenth of one's earnings. The others include controlling one's expenditures, making one's money multiply, guarding one's savings against loss, making one's home a profitable investment, providing for one's future, and increasing one's ability to earn. Arkad explains each of these ideas in turn and at length giving his students plenty of time to digest his meaning.

Arkad also dispenses the five laws of gold to his son, Nomasir. These five laws are remarkably similar to the seven cures. One is first advised to put aside one-tenth of all his earnings. Secondly, one's savings should be properly invested so that the money increases but this should be done only under the advisement of a wise counselor. Money invested in unfamiliar practices or given to tricksters is easily lost and should not be expected to be recouped. These principles are restated in each story as each story tells of a man who did not initially follow the principles and so lost out on a great deal of money.



The final chapters of the book tell how these ancient principles are still applicable to today. A professor who translated a set of clay tablets put the practices of Dabasis into action for himself to see if they would indeed work in modern society. The professor relates how over the course of one year he is almost out of debt and expects to be completely free of debt within another year. Not only is the professor almost debt free, but he and his wife have altered their spending habits so that they managed to save a tidy sum which they then invested. This investment should be enough to carry them through retirement and allow them to travel, as they've always desired.



Chapter 1, The Man Who Desired Gold

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George S. Clason presents a series of stories about the ancient Babylonians that are meant to teach the reader lessons about personal finance. The stories begin with that of Bansir, who is a chariot maker struggling to provide the luxuries his family desires. Each chapter then builds upon this initial story, reiterating past lessons and introducing new ones so that the reader is able to gain a gradual understanding of how to manage their personal finances based on simple principles.

Bansir is faced with a universal problem: he works hard all day but he feels that he is not making enough money and he wonders what he can do to increase his wealth. Bansir is not a lazy man. He builds chariots for a living and his work is highly prized. However, no matter how much work he does he feels that he should be able to save more money for his family.

Bansir meets one of his friends, Kobbi, and the two discuss their equally distressing financial situations. They sit on a wall surrounding Bansir's home and gaze on the king's palace below. The city is bustling with people conducting business and the two men consider why only a few flourish while most people must struggle to survive. Kobbi comments that he recently saw an old friend of theirs, Arkad, riding his golden chariot. Arkad was once a lowly worker like themselves but he is now deemed the richest man in Babylon.

The two men decide to seek the advice of Arkad on how to acquire great wealth. As they leave Bansir's home, Kobbi comments that the reason they do not have wealth is because they have never sought it before. Together the friends decide to invite several other men to join them and share in Arkad's knowledge.

Chapter 1, The Man Who Desired Gold Analysis

Bansir suffers from a well-known condition: the desire to possess more than one does currently. Every person in the world, even those viewed as the wealthiest, desire to have more wealth. All readers can relate to the wish for more money to cover basic living expenses, to take a nice vacation, or to be able to save for a rainy day. The reader is easily drawn into the story because they can relate to Bansir's predicament.

Kobbi's presence shows the reader that there is always someone worse off than you think you are. Bansir may not have much money but his form of employment is surely more profitable than Kobbi's career as a musician. One man's lot in life may look favorable to another who is of lesser means. What is interesting is the remedy that Bansir concocts to aide both himself and his friend. Instead of spending valuable time sitting on his wall complaining about their problems, Bansir suggests that they seek the advice of someone who was once like them but managed to improve his station in life.



Bansir's thought is not to seek a hand out from their friend but to discover the method, which improved Arkad's life. Additionally, Bansir does not decide to visit Arkad on his own but shares his thoughts with Kobbi and several other men. Bansir already appears well posed to heed Arkad's advice and increase his own wealth. Bansir is a man who is generous with what little he has and desires to help out his friends even if he cannot do so monetarily.



Chapter 2, The Richest Man in Babylon

Chapter 2, The Richest Man in Babylon Summary

Several men go to visit Arkad who is called the richest man in Babylon. Arkad is very generous and spends liberally, but he has also managed to amass a large store of wealth for himself. Arkad did not start out in life as a wealthy man but worked hard to save money. His friends come to him now because they continue to work hard but have so far been unable to save anything for themselves.

Arkad first counsels his friends on believing too heavily in fate. Arkad tells the men that Fate is indeed fickle and cannot be trusted. Even those who Fate rewards are seldom truly happy since she takes away as quickly as she gives. Arkad then begins to tell his friends how he came to accrue his wealth.

As a young man Arkad looked around him and saw all the things that wealth could be used for and decided that he wanted these things for himself. He also realized that if he were to be successful he would have to study and be patient. After months of hard labor and little to show for his efforts, Arkad meets Algamish, the moneylender. Algamish requests a copy of a particular law and in exchange agrees to tell Arkad the secret of his wealth. Upon completion of the project Algamish reveals that the secret of his success is this: a part of all he earned was his to keep. Arkad does not immediately grasp the significance of this statement and requires several attempts at putting the advice into practice before he comes to understand Algamish's words. Algamish explains that Arkad should pay himself at least one-tenth of his earnings before he pays all his other debts. In this way Arkad will be able to accrue his own store of wealth. Arkad must also learn to wisely invest his savings in order make them grow. This same advice Arkad passes on to his friends.

Chapter 2, The Richest Man in Babylon Analysis

Arkad's story presents several of the ideas that will be pursued in greater detail throughout the book. Despite being raised in a large, poor family Arkad does not despair of ever obtaining great wealth. He possesses a determination to improve himself and learn the secrets to becoming wealthy. Like Bansir, Arkad recognizes that if he is to gain wealth he will have to seek the advice of someone who already has a great deal of income. This acknowledges that a man cannot achieve wealth on his own. By establishing an early relationship with an older and experienced businessman one is better equipped to increase his own wealth. Arkad's friendship with Algamish provides him with someone to seek advice from, someone to gently point out his mistakes, and someone to offer assistance on difficult business decisions. Arkad's story lays the foundation upon which the rest of the book is built. The rest of the book breaks Arkad's story into more manageable pieces and fully explores each aspect of Arkad's

transformation from penniless worker to wealthy merchant. This break down allows the reader time to digest and comprehend what he is being taught.



Chapter 3, Seven Cures for a Lean Purse

Chapter 3, Seven Cures for a Lean Purse Summary

The third chapter turns to a discussion of how Babylon came to be the richest nation in the world. After many years of prosperity Babylon finds itself suffering from economic down turn. A select few citizens have acquired all the wealth leaving the majority of the townspeople in poverty. The king calls for Arkad to be brought before him in order to explain how the situation can be improved. Arkad puts forth seven cures for a lean purse and challenges the councilmen to discuss his cures amongst themselves to determine if he speaks falsely.

The first cure is the same bit of advice Arkad gave his friends in chapter two: keep one-tenth of your earnings for yourself and learn to survive off the other nine-tenths. The second cure involves formulating a budget that covers all necessary expenditures. Arkad then discusses the definition of "necessary" purchases. Many people try to justify the things they buy by calling them "necessary" instead of realizing that most of what we purchase is bought out of desire. In order to increase one's wealth, one must first pay necessary bills and then use the left-over for desired items as long as one does not spend more than nine-tenths their income. Arkad then relates the third cure for a lean purse. Each coin should be invested so as to produce additional income. For Arkad this involved investing in bronze used for shield making. The shield maker would borrow money to purchase his bronze. When the shield was sold the shield maker paid back the sum that had been borrowed plus an additional sum as interest. In this way Arkad was able to gradually increase his meager savings.

The fourth cure concerns the care of the principal invested. Arkad counsels the men to seek the advice of experienced investors and research the market in which they are considering investment. One should be sure that his principal can be reclaimed and not lost and that a sufficient interest will be paid at the end of the required term so as to be deemed profitable. The fifth cure is very straightforward. Arkad says that each man should own his own home instead of paying out unreasonable sums to a landlord for an unsuitable dwelling. The sixth cure for a lean purse involves insuring for one's future and the future of his family. Arkad counsels that since one never knows when death will take him, provisions should be made to care for one's family in the event of an early passing. Laying aside a portion of funds incase of premature death will enable those still living to continue a prosperous life. The seventh and final cure for a lean purse requires a man to study and learn more in order to earn more. Arkad states that wishing for more wealth does not increase wealth but learning how to work a trade with more skill will increase a man's worth to his employer and thereby increases his earnings. Once Arkad finishes explaining the seven cures for a lean purse he suggests that the assembled men go out and put into practice the seven principles.



Chapter 3, Seven Cures for a Lean Purse Analysis

Arkad is summoned to the king's palace and asked to teach others the wisdom of his financial success. Here the idea of sharing one's knowledge with several others continues. The ancient Babylonians believed that everyone should have the opportunity to increase their wealth and thereby make the nation as a whole the wealthiest in the world. This type of thinking is in contrast to the way modern society, especially American society, functions. A few select people obtain outrageous wealth and choose to keep the secret of their success to themselves. If those people like Donald Trump or Oprah Winfrey choose to share their business knowledge with the masses it is usually through a medium that will continue to earn them money while making the working class poorer. Books, tapes, and seminars that promise to give you the magic key to great success only serve to rob the unsuspecting of their hard earned dollars. Arkad's advice is free, simple to understand, and easy to practice as long as the listener possess determination. Arkad does not promise a quick fix like many infomercials today but provides his students with the means to a permanently better life.



Chapter 4, Meet the Goddess of Good Luck

Chapter 4, Meet the Goddess of Good Luck Summary

The chapter starts out with a Babylonian proverb about luck followed by an introduction to the Temple of Learning. Arkad holds classes at the Temple of Learning. Large groups of men will gather around the wise man and discuss various topics. The topic for this chapter is the Goddess of Good Luck.

When Arkad asks for a topic of discussion, one man stands and says that he would like to discuss ways to entice Good Luck to oneself. The gathered men try to discuss the ways in which luck has profited them. However, not one of them can name an instance in which luck has increased their wealth. The conversation turns to a discussion of gaming tables. Arkad counsels that by the law of odds only the gamekeeper is assured of making a significant income each night at the gaming tables. Arkad then challenges the men to think of one prominent citizen who started their wealth by winning at the gaming tables. The men are unable to name one person, including themselves, who has benefited consistently from the gaming tables. Arkad then suggests that good luck does not frequent these places and must be sought elsewhere. Arkad further questions if the men are not overlooking the gifts of the goddess when they successfully conclude a business transaction.

One man suggests that they consider instances in which a profitable transaction was within their reach but for some reason failed to come to fruition. Arkad invites the man to share his story with the assembly. The man, who is a merchant, stands and tells of a missed business venture that his father advised him on many years ago. The man now regrets not listening to his father because the venture proved quite lucrative for those who did invest in the plan. Another man stands and relates his story about a missed business transaction. After each man speaks a man from Syria stands up and makes comments. The Syrian says that both of these men are procrastinators and that is why they failed to realize the profitable transaction placed before them. The men agree that the majority of missed opportunities are the result of hesitation. Arkad then asks the merchant who first broached the subject of good luck for his thoughts after their discussion. The merchant concludes that good luck cannot be enticed to a man but a man who takes advantage of opportunities without hesitation receives good luck. Arkad agrees with this conclusion and adds, "men of action are favored by the goddess of good luck".

Chapter 4, Meet the Goddess of Good Luck Analysis

Everyone wants to get lucky. How many people play the lottery daily or spend an entire paycheck at the casino hoping to hit 'the big one'? Many people sit around lamenting

that they were one number off on the lottery or a quarter short at the slot machines instead of realizing that these types of investments are based on what Arkad terms "fickle fate."

As the men in this chapter come to conclude, luck only happens to those who look for it and acknowledge fortuitous opportunities when they appear. Perhaps the truth of the matter is that luck does not actually exist. What people often term luck is really the result of their own hard work and application of wisdom. By recognizing a profitable and stable business venture when one is presented a person is able to increase their wealth. Luck comes not by chance as most people believe but by being wise enough to see the entire picture when one chances upon a profitable enterprise. This appears to be the conclusion of the men at the Temple of Learning. Those men who choose to act and do not hesitate are rewarded for their wisdom. Those who choose to seek quick cash at the gaming tables or fail to recognize a bona fide business venture lose their money.



Chapter 5, The Five Laws of Gold

Chapter 5, The Five Laws of Gold Summary

Kalabab, an old man journeying across the desert, decides to tell his companions the story of Arkad's son, Nomasir. The story is meant to illustrate the difficulty learning the difference between executing wisdom when dealing with gold and being overcome by greed. Kalabab knows the story of Nomasir because he has met personally with Arkad's son. Kalabab once worked for a man who took fine rugs to Nomasir's home for Nomasir to choose his favorites for use in his home.

Babylonian tradition maintains that sons live with their parents and will inherit their parents' wealth. Arkad did not care for this custom and chose instead to send Nomasir out into the world to try to make his own fortune. Arkad hoped that this would teach his son the value of wisdom and show him how quickly gold can be lost if not governed carefully. Arkad gave his son a bag of gold and a clay tablet with the five laws of gold carved on it. Nomasir was then sent to make his own way in the world and to learn how to wisely manage his money. In ten years time Nomasir was to return to his father's home and report how he had fared.

At the end of ten years, Nomasir returns to his father's house, and at a great feast prepared in his honor relates all that has happened to him since leaving home. Nomasir first decided to travel to Nineveh where he had heard that great wealth could be gained. Along the way he met several men who offered to include him on a business transaction. Foolishly Nomasir agreed to the venture but ended up losing a large amount of his gold. Once he arrived in Nineveh Nomasir engaged in another business dealing but again lost most of his remaining gold. Nomasir is penniless and has no prospects for recouping his lost gold. At this point Nomasir takes out the clay tablet and reads the five laws of gold. Nomasir resolves to strictly follow the five laws inscribed on the tablet and to recoup the gold that he lost, as well as, increase that amount for his own fortune. Nomasir begins to make wiser decisions regarding his money and by the time he returns to Arkad Nomasir is able to repay what was given him plus two additional bags of gold.

After concluding his tale, Kalabab goes through each of the five laws of gold and discusses each one in detail. Kalabab then tells his companions that the next day they will enter the city of Babylon and each man will have the opportunity to put the five laws into practice. Kalabab asks each man whether he will be able to give as good of an account of himself at the end of ten years as Nomasir gave to Arkad. Kalabab concludes that a man's desires must be guided by knowledge if a man is going to obtain his desires.



Chapter 5, The Five Laws of Gold Analysis

This chapter appears to contain two lessons. The reader learns about wisdom but also about the role of age and maturity in obtaining great wealth. The reader could assume that Nomasir is eighteen when he leaves home. Armed with that mental picture the reader can then imagine why Nomasir quickly lost his wealth. Young men and women who leave the house for the first time assume that they are invincible and that they have all the answers to life's problems. Even if Nomasir was raised well by his father, the young man is going to want to live life his own way and throw off the teachings of his father. Youth naturally desires to do things differently from the way they were raised even if this means failing severely.

If a youth has been taught well during their life he will eventually return to the wisdom he learned as a child. Most of the time young people must fail miserably before they realize that their parents really did know what was best. Nomasir must first loose the majority of his gold pieces before he turns to the clay tablets for guidance. As the question at the beginning of the chapter suggests the pull of gold is often too difficult to overcome in order to follow the wise path initially.



Chapter 6, The Gold Lender of Babylon

Chapter 6, The Gold Lender of Babylon Summary

Rodan has just been given fifty gold pieces by the king in exchange for his magnificent spears. As Rodan walks away from the palace he wonders to what end he should use his gold. Several days pass and Rodan is still uncertain about what to do with his gold. His sister has approached him and asked for a loan so that her husband can become a merchant. However, Rodan is not certain that this would be the best investment of his money and so decides to seek the advice of Mathon, the gold lender.

Mathon listens carefully to Rodan's problem and then offers up two different stories as means of an answer. The first story is about a farmer who can understand the speech of his animals. The farmer overhears the ass telling the ox to pretend to be sick in order to get out of working in the fields. The farmer then puts the ass to work in the fields. Mathon says that the moral of the story is to help a friend only if you can do so without bringing your friend's burden upon yourself. The second tale is really a series of tales about the objects Mathon keeps in his token chest. For each loan that Mathon makes he requires a token from the borrower of good faith so that he knows the loan will be repaid. Mathon selects several different objects from the chest and tells Rodan about its owner. Some of the people have left a small token but promptly repaid their debts. Others have left great tokens only to forfeit on their loan.

Rodan is greatly interested in the tales of the gold lender but sees no answer to his predicament in what Mathon tells him. Mathon then asks Rodan a series of questions about his brother-in-law. Rodan reveals that he does not find his brother-in-law to be a knowledgeable businessman. Mathon then asks how much gold Rodan has saved over the past three years. Rodan answers three gold pieces: one for each year. Mathon tells Rodan to offer to lend his sister and her husband the amount of gold that he could save in one year - one gold coin. This way Rodan will be out no more gold than what his brother-in-law may one day be able to repay. Mathon finally counsels Rodan to invest his money only on the advice of wise and responsible merchants and not to throw it away on the whims of men. Mathon advises that if Rodan acts with a little caution he will not regret his investments.

Chapter 6, The Gold Lender of Babylon Analysis

This chapter continues the idea of seeking wise counsel when unsure of how to proceed with one's money. The previous chapter introduced the five laws of gold but the gold lender helps to explain the laws and show how they are to be put into practice. The stories of the tokens in Mathon's chest illustrate how circumstances differ among people and how money affects each person differently. The gold lender has seen a wide variety of people desiring to borrow money and he must evaluate the risk involved with each man who asks for a loan. So must each person evaluate the risks involved with the

multiple areas in which he may invest his money. Rodan's predicament shows how difficult deciding what is best to do with one's earnings can be, especially when family becomes involved. Mathon counsels Rodan and the reader into wisely applying Arkad's wisdom to every investment situation.



Chapter 7, The Walls of Babylon

Chapter 7, The Walls of Babylon Summary

Babylon is under siege by the Assyrians. The bulk of the Babylonian army is away to the East fighting the Elamites. Banzar, an older warrior left behind in the city, stands on the walls of the city watching the attacking forces below. As he watches several townspeople approach him and ask Banzar if he thinks the city walls will hold back the invading army. Banzar tells the merchant that the walls are strong and will hold. A woman approaches Banzar next and asks him the same question. Banzar again tells the woman that the walls are strong and to stay safely hidden behind them. A small girl approaches Banzar to ask if the city walls will keep her and her family safe from the Assyrians. Banzar tells the girl to tell her family that the walls will protect them. For three hundred years the city walls have stood against invaders and Bazar asserts that they will not fail now. For three weeks and five days Banzar keeps watch atop the city walls reassuring all who inquire about the strength of the walls. Finally the invaders retreat and the city is safe once again.

The moral of the story is that Babylon endured for so many centuries because it was fully protected. If Babylon had been any less prepared for attack it would have surely fallen into enemy hands many years ago. Today savings accounts and insurance help to protect our money. Smart investors will take great pains to provide themselves with adequate protection.

Chapter 7, The Walls of Babylon Analysis

This chapter is perhaps the shortest of them all and carries the simplest message: be sure to protect what you care about or risk losing it. The walls of Babylon were thick and impenetrably strong. They kept out numerous enemies for many years. The Babylonians invested in their walls to ensure that they would provide more than adequate protection for their city. This is how one should protect one's investments and savings. If one places his money into a venture that is not secure then he risks losing that investment. However, by heeding wise council and making sure that a potential investment will be soundly protected, a man can be reasonably reassured that his money will be safe from loss.

This chapter becomes even more interesting once the reader reaches the end of the book and reads about the fall of Babylon. A silly error in judgment resulted in an entire nation being destroyed. Even though the walls were soundly built and able to withstand the force of attacking enemies Babylon was captured when King Nabonidus foolishly left the gates open. This lack of caution caused the fall of the wealthiest nation in history. Similarly, a man who takes every precaution but overlooks a minor detail puts himself at risk for a great loss.



Chapter 8, The Camel Trader of Babylon

Chapter 8, The Camel Trader of Babylon Summary

Tarkad has lost all his gold and no longer has enough money to buy even the simplest food for himself. Additionally he is in debt to several people and does not have the means to repay them. As he is wandering the streets of the market hoping to find a hand out of food, Tarkad meets Dabasir, one of his creditors. Dabasir invites Tarkad to accompany him to a local tavern so that they can discuss how Tarkad will repay his debt to Dabasir.

While Dabasir enjoys a whole goat leg, Tarkad sits hungrily by and listens as Dabasir relates the story of his own rise from slavery.

As a young man Dabasir took a beautiful wife and tried to provide her with all the things that she desired. For a while he was able to keep his debts to a minimum but over time he and his wife desired finer and finer things. Dabasir begins to borrow money from people in order to purchase the things he wants until he is almost penniless. Dabasir's wife leaves him to return to her father's house and Dabasir takes up company with a band of thieves. Eventually the group is caught and Dabasir is made the slave of a Syrian chief. The chief's wife, Sira, makes Dabasir her personal camel herder.

One day as Dabasir leads Sira's camel across the desert the two begin a conversation. Sira asks Dabasir if he has the heart of a slave or of a freeman. Dabasir confesses that he was born a freeman but unfortunate circumstances have made him a slave. Sira and Dabasir realize that they have much in common. Both of them are stuck in situations not of their own choosing. Sira counsels Dabasir that if he so desires and if he truly possesses the heart of a freeman that he can change his station in life. Sira helps Dabasir escape slavery by providing a camel and a cover story for him while on a trip across the desert. Dabasir vows that he will return to Babylon, repay his debts, and regain the love of his wife.

Dabasir pushes himself through the desert despite hunger and thirst and eventually finds himself once again in Babylon. In Babylon Dabasir seeks the advice of Mathon who counsels him to find a business in which he is knowledgeable. Dabasir manages to gain employment with a camel trader and slowly builds his own enterprise. With determination and time Dabasir is able to repay all of his debtors and his wife returns to him. Tarkad listens attentively to the story and vows at the end that he too will find a way to repay all his debts instead of wallowing in self-pity. Dabasir calls for the tavern owner to bring Tarkad food and the two conclude their meal together.

Chapter 8, The Camel Trader of Babylon Analysis

Dabasir's story is the embodiment of determination and foolishness. Dabasir is overcome by his desire for the finer things in life. He wishes to outfit himself and his wife



in the finest clothes, to have nice furnishings, and eat fine foods. However, his excess spending ends up costing him far more than the things he desires are worth. His wife becomes frustrated at his spending and borrowing practices and returns to her father's house. Dabasir can no longer receive credit from lenders and has no money to pay back what he already owes. As a result he turns to thievery, which eventually lands him in the hands of a slave trader.

Dabasir's story is common enough today. Many people borrow as much as they can plus a little more on credit and then fall miserably behind in their payments. People purchase homes that they cannot afford and must default on their loans. Like Dabasir each person must decide if they wish to continue living their lives as slaves to their debts or establish their freedom by working to repay their debts. For many the obstacles seem insurmountable but with determination and a little assistance from those with wisdom, one may release themselves from the bonds of financial ruin and lead lives as free men with a substantial amount of money to care for themselves and their families.



Chapter 9, The Clay Tablets from Babylon

Chapter 9, The Clay Tablets from Babylon Summary

Chapter five begins with a letter from Alfred Shrewsbury to Professor Franklin Caldwell. Shrewsbury has just finished translating a set of clay tablets sent to him by Caldwell and is sending his findings back to the professor. There are five clay tablets and they were written by Dabasir, the camel trader from the previous chapter. The tablets detail exactly how Dabasir was able to pay off his debtors and win back his wife following his escape from the Syrian chief.

The first tablet outlines Dabasir's three-fold plan for paying off his debts. Dabasir first resolves to set aside one-tenth of all his earnings for savings. Second, Dabasir states that he will use seven-tenths of his earnings to provide for himself and his wife. The final two-tenths of his earnings will be distributed equally among his debtors each month. On the second tablet Dabasir records the names of the people he owes money to and the amount owed to each. Tablet three relates how Dabasir visited each of his creditors in turn and laid forth his plan. All but three men were willing to accept Dabasir's terms. Three of the men grumble about Dabasir's proposal but have no choice but to accept his terms. The fourth tablet tells how Dabasir has fared since implementing his plan. At the end of three months time Dabasir has saved twenty-one gold pieces, he has paid his creditors from two-tenths of his earnings each month, and his wife has returned to them and is keeping their house in moderate comfort. The fifth tablet comes twelve months after the fourth. On the day that Dabasir inscribes this tablet he has finally repaid all of his debts. When his final payment is completed each of the three disgruntled creditors compliments Dabasir on his determination and his excellent plan.

The chapter concludes with a final letter from Shrewsbury to Caldwell. Shrewsbury writes to update Caldwell on how his own implementation of Dabasir's plan worked out. After a year of modifying their expenditures, Shrewsbury and his wife managed to save a tidy sum that they then invested. This investment will provide them with enough income to sustain them once Shrewsbury retires. They have also managed to pay down a large portion of their debt and expect to be debt free in another year's time.

Chapter 9, The Clay Tablets from Babylon Analysis

This chapter holds the most relevance for the reader. Dr. Shrewsbury's letters and comments on how he has been able to apply Dabasir's plan to his own life shows the reader that these ancient principles can still be used effectively in modern society. Dabasir has neatly outlined his plan for all to follow. His decision to inscribe his plan on the clay tablets extends Arkad's verbal sharing of information. Now future generations, even those thousands of years in the future, will be able to benefit from his wisdom. The

reader would be prudent to recognize this gift and realize that in Dabasir he has already found his first trusted advisor.

The only thing in this chapter which may prove difficult for the reader is how to apply Dabasir's bargaining with his creditors to their own lives. Most credit card companies or banks are not easily convinced to agree to a repayment plan not of their design. However, modern readers can circumnavigate this problem by taking advantage of lower interest rate refinancing and long-term balance transfer offers at a reduced rate. Also, available to modern readers is the option of consolidating debt into one payment. So, even this slight hitch in Dabasir's plan can be overcome with determination and ingenuity.



Chapter 10, The Luckiest Man in Babylon

Chapter 10, The Luckiest Man in Babylon Summary

Sharru Nada leads a caravan across the desert. Riding close beside him is the grandson of his former partner. Sharru Nada eyes the young man, Hadan Gula, as they ride across the landscape. The boy is nothing like his grandfather and Sharru Nada worries about the young man's fate. Hadan Gula does not value hard work and desires only money. Sharru Nada decides to tell Hadan Gula the story of how his grandfather, Arad Gula, and he came to be partners.

Sharru Nada sees three farmers working in a field outside of Babylon and realizes that he has seen these farmers before. As they ride along Sharru Nada begins to tell Hadan Gula his tale. Many years ago Sharru Nada passed by the same field and the same farmers. The man chained next to Sharru Nada, Megiddo, scoffs at the way the farmers are plowing and says that they are lazy. Also chained to the column are Zabado, who is a sheep thief, and Pirate who has a tattoo like those of a sailor. The men are slaves and are being marched to Babylon to be sold. Megiddo counsels the others to work hard for their new masters because work is the only sure way to avoid being beaten to death. Pirate and Zabado laugh at this plan but Sharru Nada pays attention to Megiddo's words.

The next morning the men are taken into the city and presented to local merchants for sale. Pirate and Zabado are each sold quickly. Megiddo talks to a farmer and is purchased by the man. As the end of the day nears Sharru Nada approaches a baker who has come to buy a slave. Sharru Nada does such a good job presenting himself to the baker that the man hands over a sum of gold and takes Sharru Nada back to his shop. Sharru Nada does all he can to learn the baker's trade well and eventually strikes a bargain with the baker. Sharru Nada will bake extra honey cakes and sell them on the streets sharing his profits with the baker. One day as Sharru Nada is pushing his cart through the streets he encounters Arad Gula who is a slave for a rug merchant. Arad Gula is impressed with Sharru Nada's business savvy and the two form a friendship.

Some time passes and Sharru Nada is sold in order to pay a debt owed by the baker. Sharru Nada is made to work as a slave building the Grand Canal and quickly becomes weakened by the hard labor in the sun. As he contemplates his course of action he thinks back on Pirate and Zabado. Pirate was flogged and hung for killing his master. Zabado works on the construction of the city walls and is beaten daily by his master. Then Sharru Nada thinks about Megiddo who has callused hands but is happy because he gives all he can when he works. A messenger comes to request that Sharru Nada be sent back to the baker. When Sharru Nada returns to the bakers' he learns that his freedom has been bought by Arad Gula who managed to work hard enough to purchase



his own freedom as well. As a part of his freedom Arad Gula asks that Sharru Nada partner with him.

Because Sharru Nada heeded Megiddo's advice he was able to work hard and gain the notice of Arad Gula who also appreciated hard work and desired to use their skills to partner together. Hadan Gula listens to Sharru Nada's tale in disbelief. The young man is at first unwilling to believe that his grandfather was once a slave, but as Sharru Nada continues his tale Hadan Gula comes to realize the lesson that his grandfather left him. Hadan Gula realizes that he too must pay his dues and work if he is to obtain the same amount of wealth as his grandfather acquired. The young man removes all his jewelry and slows his pace until he is riding behind Sharru Nada as a sign of respect.

Chapter 10, The Luckiest Man in Babylon Analysis

Chapter ten is the longest chapter of the book. Sharru Nada's story is long and involved but it teaches a very simple lesson: hard work brings great reward. However, this lesson stands in opposition to the chapter's title. Luck did not rescue Sharru Nada from the canal builder's employ; it was his hard work for the baker that received the notice of Arad Gula.

This chapter seems to connect best with chapter four and the discussion of the goddess of luck. As the men in that chapter concluded - it is the actions of men that entice the goddess of luck to visit them. Luck rarely comes to a man who sits idly by waiting for it. Those who possess determination and a desire to work will profit from their ventures. It is the act of hard work that makes one lucky; luck does not bring hard work.

Also of note in this chapter is the reaction of Hadan Gula to Sharru Nada's story. Hadan Gula is an excellent example of the inexperienced youth who takes his life for granted and has yet to learn that the things he has inherited were purchased through the hard work of men before him. Hadan is at first incredulous upon learning that his grandfather was once a slave, but as Sharru Nada continues his story the young man comes to realize what was sacrificed so that he could have the pleasing life that he leads. Hadan is fortunate that he does not have to suffer like Nomasir did in order to learn the value of wisdom and hard work. Hadan is able to learn these lessons by listening carefully to the words of Sharru Nada. However, Hadan's reaction to the story is the same as Nomasir's eventual reaction to his father's clay tablet - both young men realize that they may come from a privileged family but without their own efforts the wealthy lifestyle they are accustomed to will not continue.



Chapter 11, An Historical Sketch of Babylon

Chapter 11, An Historical Sketch of Babylon Summary

This final chapter provides the reader with the history of ancient Babylon. For all its riches one would surmise that the city was situated in a tropical climate with abundant natural resources. However, Babylon was located on the banks of Euphrates River in a flat, dry valley. Ancient Babylonians are credited with the first feat of engineering for their vast irrigation canals that nourished their fertile soils.

Thankfully for historians the Babylonians left detailed accounts of their existence etched into clay tablets. Libraries containing thousands of tablets have been uncovered by archeologists allowing scientists to piece together the grand history of this ancient civilization. Queen Semiramis is credited with constructing the first walls around the city, while later walls were finished by Nebuchadnezzar. The scale of the walls is beyond belief. Some were as tall as a modern day fifteen-story building and so thick that a six-horse chariot could be driven around the top with room to spare.

Babylonians were also skilled in the arts. This ancient society used metal spearheads while many of their contemporaries were using stone-headed spears and axes. As Clason's book evidences the Babylonians were also skilled financiers. They left behind a great and wonderful history that was cut short by an unseemingly strange set of circumstances. King Cyrus marched on Babylon and was met outside the gates by King Nabonidus. The soldiers inside the city failed to shut the gates so that when Nabonidus was defeated Cyrus marched his army right through the open gates.

Chapter 11, An Historical Sketch of Babylon Analysis

This final chapter seems out of place. The reader would assume that historical information would be placed in an introduction or an appendix in order to set the stage for what is to follow or clarify what has come before it. However, the choice of placement for this information makes sense if the reader stops to consider the book as a whole. For the first ten chapters the reader has been immersed in fabled stories about the great financial strength of the Babylonians. It is easy to forget that these people actually lived and made substantial contributions to history. By spending a few minutes giving a brief history of Babylon's rise and fall the author centers the reader on the reality of what he has been explaining in the previous chapters. This information is not false or made up - it has worked in the past and it can continue to work today.

Another advantage of leaving the historical information till the final chapter is that the reader is left with one final lesson. For all the Babylonians accomplishments and wealth they were abruptly cut out of history. One fatal mistake by King Nabonidus cost the

entire nation their existence. This mistake illustrates that even when one has achieved the greatness he desired and maintained it for an extended period of time he cannot relax his watchful eye or forsake the wisdom he has learned.



Characters

Bansir

Bansir is the first character the reader meets. Bansir is a Babylonian chariot maker who does excellent work but has been unable to set aside extra funds for his family's pleasure. Bansir's home overlooks the king's palace and he is able to sit and observe the comings and goings of the marketplace. Bansir wishes that he could earn enough money to buy the finer things for his wife and himself but he sees no way to make this happen. Bansir, along with his friend Kobbi, decide that they have been unsuccessful in acquiring great wealth because they have never sought the advice of those who have great wealth. Once this has been decided the two men decide to seek the advice of an old friend: Arkad. After hearing Arkad's tale of how he rose from a regular merchant to a wealthy man, Bansir decides to put Arkad's advice into practice so that he too can improve his station in life.

Kobbi

Kobbi appears briefly in chapter one and does not resurface again in the book. Kobbi is a musician who finds himself with little money and more debt than he can handle. Kobbi comes to Bansir for a loan but is rejected because Bansir is no better off than Kobbi. Together Bansir and Kobbi discuss their financial situations and decide to seek the advice of Arkad.

Arkad

Arkad is the man who holds the same title as the book. Arkad did not always hold this title but came to it over time. One of the most notable things about Arkad is that despite his wealth he is a very generous and friendly man. Arkad's wealth and wisdom are referenced many times throughout the book and are indeed the basis for the story.

Arkad is the son of a large and poor family. His prospects forever achieving great wealth seemed pretty dim, but Arkad possesses determination and vowed that he would one day be able to purchase all the fine things he saw in the marketplace. While working as a scribe Arkad met Algamish. Algamish requested a copy of a long law and Arkad bargained with him. If Arkad was able to finish the tablets in the span of one day and night then Algamish agreed to tell him the secret of his wealth. Arkad completed the tablets on time and Algamish tells Arkad this piece of advice: part of all he earns is his to keep. Arkad does not at first understand this statement but through continued counseling from Algamish he comes to realize that in order to save money he must first pay himself. Arkad begins to follow this philosophy and overtime amasses great wealth. Arkad then learns to invest wisely so that his savings become profitable. Because of his wisdom Arkad is sought after by many people throughout the book for advice and the



whole of Babylonian finance seems to be based on the principles passed from Algamish to Arkad.

Algamish

Arkad is hailed as the richest man in Babylon but he would not have become so if not for the helpful advice of Algamish. When Arkad was a young scribe he received a request from Algamish for several copies of a particular law. Arkad struck a deal with Algamish that if he finished the copies in one day's time Algamish will tell Arkad the secret of his wealth. Algamish agrees to the bargain and returns the next day for the tablets. At that time Algamish tells Arkad that the secret to his wealth is this: a part of all his earning is his to keep. Algamish then counsels Arkad to think on this statement and learn to put it to good use. When Algamish dies he leaves his estate to Arkad because Arkad was able to correctly interpret Algamish's advice and use it for his benefit.

Nomasir

Nomasir is Arkad's son. According to Babylonian tradition a son is to remain in the father's household and inherit his father's estate. However, Arkad decides to pursue a different path with Nomasir. When Nomasir is of an appropriate age Arkad provides his son with a bag of gold and a clay tablet inscribed with the five laws of gold. Arkad then sends Nomasir out into the world to try and make his own fortune. At the end of ten years Nomasir returns to his father's house and reports how he has fared. After engaging in several false business enterprises Nomasir is penniless. At his lowest point, Nomasir finally reads the advice inscribed on the clay tablet. Nomasir then becomes employed by a slave owner and slowly begins to put his father's advice into practice. With the help of the slave owner and the wisdom of his father Nomasir is able to build a thriving business for himself and recoup all the gold that he lost. When Nomasir returns to his father's home after ten years he presents Arkad with three bags of gold as a sign of what he has learned from his experience.

Rodan

Rodan is a young spear maker in Babylon. The king is particularly pleased with a recent shipment of spears and rewards Rodan with fifty gold pieces. Rodan is overjoyed at the extra income but is puzzled over how he should put the gold to use. Rodan's sister has approached him to ask for an investment so that her husband can start a new business. Rodan is wary of his sister's request and seeks advice from Mathon. After listening to Mathon's tales Rodan decides that he will offer to lend his sister the sum equal to what he has been able to save in one year - one gold piece. Rodan then sensibly seeks to invest the rest of his money in a profitable business venture.



Dabasir

Dabasir is a Babylonian camel trader. He loaned Tarkad a sum of money once but has yet to be repaid. When Dabasir meets Tarkad in the market he invites the young man to dine with him while he relates the story of his own rise from slavery to wealthy merchant. The lesson the reader is intended to learn from Dabasir's story is that one can alter their station in life if he is determined enough. Dabasir lost his wealth due to poor choices in handling his money. He borrowed more than he was able to repay. As a result he turns to thievery, which eventually lands him as a slave to a Syrian chief. With the help of the chief's wife Dabasir is able to escape the chief, return to Babylon, and work hard to recoup his losses and repay his debts.

Mathon

Mathon is the gold lender of Babylon. Mathon gives advice to several other characters including Rodan and Dabasir. Mathon has extended credit to many people in his time as a gold lender and learned much about making wise investments. Mathon counsels people by telling them tales of those he has lent money too and the circumstances that lead them to need money. After examining the numerous stories Mathon tells, the people who sought advice from him are better equipped to make decisions for the management of their own money.

Banzar

Banzar is an old soldier who is no longer able to serve in battle. While the army is in the East battling Elamites, Banzar stands on top of the city walls watching as the Assyrians lay siege to Babylon. As he stands there Banzar constantly reassures the townspeople that the walls surrounding Babylon are strong and will continue to protect the citizens as they have for numerous years. Banzar's message tells the reader that strong protection is necessary when making investments. Selecting the right insurance for one's investments ensures that one's money will be returned to them and not lost.

Sharru Nada and Arad Gula

Sharru Nada is a wealthy merchant of Babylon. He was once a slave who was lucky enough to have his freedom bought for him. The man who paid for his freedom was also once a slave but the man was impressed with Sharru Nada's work ethic. Arad Gula appreciates those who work hard and likes what he sees in Sharru's business enterprise. Both men are working hard to save enough in order to purchase their own freedom. Sharru Nada is sold to another master before he can save enough to purchase his freedom. While Sharru Nada is serving his new master and debating whether he wants to live or not, Arad Gula continues to save his earnings. Arad Gula eventually purchases his freedom and that of Sharru Nada. Once free the men form a partnership that brings great prosperity to them both.



Objects/Places

Gold

Gold, and how to obtain more of it, is the central tenant of the book. While modern readers may not be concerned with obtain gold, they can certainly understand the desire for more wealth whatever the currency. For the Babylonians gold was the means to a better life and the more gold one had the better his life. The desire for gold fuels each character in the book and the entire lesson of the book involve earning, keeping, and increasing one's supply of gold.

Bansir's House

The story begins at Bansir's house. The structure is that of a simple worker and is enough to protect his family from the elements. Bansir's house overlooks the great palace of the king and Bansir often sits on his garden wall to gaze at the palace. While not integral to the entire story, Bansir's house sets the stage for the personal struggle that is discussed in the book. Bansir's house represents the working class who are unable to improve their station in life.

Babylon

Ancient Babylon was the seat of great wealth. Babylonians understood the secret to obtaining riches and shared their secrets with the entire society so that no one group of people was wealthier than another. Babylon was revered as an example of richness and beauty. It is for these reasons that their story is used to illustrate the principles for obtaining great wealth.

Temple of Learning

Ancient Babylon did not have schools or universities in the same sense as we do today. However, they had centers of learning and one of the most revered, although not readily historicized, buildings in Babylon was the Temple of Learning. Here men would gather to hear a speaker expound on a particular topic. Arkad often spoke at the temple and men would gather by the hundreds to hear his wisdom and discuss their concerns with him.

The Desert

Babylon is surrounded by desert landscapes and many of the tales told throughout the book are told while people are gathered around a campfire or riding through the desert. Dabasil works as a camel tender in the desert and must find his way across the desert



in order to return to Babylon. Sharru Nada relates the tale of his own rise from slavery while riding through the desert on his way to Babylon.

Nineveh

Nineveh is mentioned several times throughout the book. It appears to be a neighboring city where Babylonians often went in exile or to seek fortune by establishing trade. Nineveh does not factor largely into the story but because it is mentioned in several of the tales it seemed note worthy. Nineveh is of course the city that Jonah in the Bible was sent to by God to warn the people about their bad behavior. Jonah was not anxious to journey to Nineveh because the townspeople were so wicked but at the time of events in this book Nineveh appears to be a well-educated and prosperous city.

The Five Laws of Gold

Arkad gives his son Nomasir a tablet inscribed with the Five Laws of Gold. Nomasir uses these laws when he is sent away from Arkad's home to try and make his own fortune. The Five Laws are presented in chapter five and explained by Kalabab. The laws are as follows:

The first law states that gold comes easily to those who would put aside one-tenth of their earnings. The second law states that gold will work hard for the master who puts it to profitable use. In other words gold will multiple if invested wisely. The third law says that gold should be invested wisely according to the advice of knowledgeable advisors. If this law is followed then one is assured that their investment will be returned to him and not riskily lost. The fourth law states that gold will be easily lost if invested in businesses or purposes, which are not fully understood by the investor. A man should not sink his money into just any investment but should make sure to seek the advice of wise counselors. The fifth law states that gold will flee the man who tries to earn money by investing it with tricksters or pursues his own romantic desires. Whims should not be followed when investing money because more often than not the money is quickly lost.

The Seven Cures for a Lean Purse

Arkad is called to the king's palace to advise his counselors on wise investing. Babylon has fallen close to financial ruin because a few men have been able to acquire the majority of the wealth. The king desires for all people to have the opportunity to accumulate adequate wealth for themselves. For seven days Arkad speaks to a group of one hundred men and teaches them the seven cures for a lean purse - one lesson per day. The seven cures are as follows:

The first cure requires men to keep back one-tenth of their earnings and learn to live off of the remaining portion. In this way a man is assured of having at least a few coins to save for himself instead of waiting to see what he has leftover after all his debtors are paid. The second cure calls for men to control their expenditures. Not all expenses are



necessary and a man must learn to distinguish between those purchases, which are needed, and which are merely desires. In this way a man can reduce his payments and learn to live off of nine-tenths of his earnings. For the third cure men are encouraged to make their gold multiply. This can be accomplished by wisely investing one's money in profitable ventures that will provide the investor with a return on his money. In order to retain one's savings a man must refrain from investing in foolish ventures that contain a higher risk of loss than of return. This is the idea behind the fourth cure for a lean purse. The fifth cure is quite simple. A man should house his family in a home that he owns instead of paying outrageous sums to rent an inappropriate dwelling. Wives are happier in their own home and men will take greater pride in maintaining their own dwellings. The sixth cure advises men to provide for the future in case of an early or unexpected death. Monies should be set aside for one's family to live on should he die before his time. In this way a man's family will be able to continue earning and investing after the man's death. The seventh and final cure counsels a man to increase his ability to earn. In order to do this a man must study over time to enhance his worth to his employer. By becoming a better and more knowledgeable worker a man can acquire greater earnings and increase the amount of his savings.

Morals

Many of the chapters end with a moral lesson contained in a small box. At the end of chapter two the following moral appears: A part of all you earn is yours to keep. The end of chapter four tells the reader that men of action are favored by the goddess of good luck. The lesson to be remembered from the gold lender of Babylon's story is that it is better to use a little caution than suffer a great regret. The walls of Babylon teach the reader that one cannot afford to be without adequate protection. The camel trader teaches Tarkad that where determination is, the way can be found. These morals serve as a final reminder to the reader of the main idea of the chapter.

Clay Tablets

As the final chapter notes, if the ancient Babylonians had not recorded their activities on clay tablets then we would have no knowledge of their existence or their contributions to the world. The Babylonians were excellent record keepers. The "engraved legends, poetry, history, transcriptions of royal decrees, the laws of the land, titles to property, promissory notes and even letters" on clay tablets. Many of these tablets were housed in libraries and so remain intact to this day. Dr. Shrewsbury is able to translate the majority of Dabasisir's diary, which was inscribed on clay tablets, and so learn the full story behind Dabasisir's return to prosperity.



Themes

Action vs. Luck

People often wish that lady luck will smile on them and give them all their heart's desires. Unfortunately life does not work this way and people are rarely blessed to be handed a large sum of money with no strings attached. That is not to say that luck does not exist. Some people play the lottery daily but never win; others buy a ticket one time on a whim and are rewarded with a large jackpot. The difference between these two types of people is in their intentions. Those who purchase a lottery ticket on a regular basis often hope that they will hit 'the big one' so that they will never have to work again. They are looking for the easy way out of life's problems. On the other hand those who rarely play games of chance are usually content to work hard for their earnings. They choose to toss a few dollars away on an off chance just to see what will happen but are not disappointed when they lose that money.

In chapter four Arkad and his followers discuss the goddess of luck. Their conclusion is that luck does present opportunities for men to take advantage of but one must be prudent enough to seize the opportunity when it is presented. Lady Luck will not do all of the work for a man but she will give him the chance to act. Therefore when an opportunity is missed a man should not say that luck frowned on him but that he failed to act. A man must be responsible for his action or inaction. If a man is not willing to assume responsibility for his actions then he cannot be trusted to wisely invest his money or pay his debts. Those who act responsibly will prosper because they will recognize the lucky opportunity put before them. Those who continue to wait for Lady Luck to provide all their worldly desires will continue to be disappointed and remain in debt.

Wisdom

At the beginning of chapter five a question is asked about choosing between a bag of gold or tablets carved with words of wisdom. The story then unfolds to tell how many people would first choose the gold only to quickly lose it because they did not read the words of wisdom and learn how to keep their gold and make it multiply.

Gold is quickly lost when men conduct business without wisdom. The story of Nomasir centers on the need for wisdom prior to the spending of gold. Youth and lack of experience combine to rob Nomasir of his gold before he has been out of his father's house many days. Nomasir was given all the tools necessary to go forth and make his bag of gold multiply. Had he exhibited even a sliver of wisdom and read the clay tablet inscribed with the five laws of gold he would not have had to suffer such terrible losses.

However, this is often the case when men are given a large sum of money and the free reign to do with it as they wish. 'Gold fever' seems to overcome men and they lose all



common sense. The first impulse is to spend the gold and outfit one's self in finery so as to suggest great wealth. Only those who have previously suffered great losses take the time to consider what to do with their money. Wise men will take the time to consult with several other knowledgeable men about the best use of their gold. Wise men realize that if gold is quickly spent it will usually be quickly lost and that if they are to remain wealthy and acquire more wealth they must invest it wisely not rashly.

The wise man will also come to understand that Arkad's principles are not a one-time proposition. The seven cures for a lean purse and the five laws of gold are not meant to be followed only one time. A man cannot rest once he has learned to live on nine-tenths of his income, provided for his future, and purchased his own home. As Sharru Nada tries to teach Hadan Gula, a man must continually be careful so as to continue increasing his earnings and investments. As Arkad tells the one hundred men at the king's palace, one must work to increase his ability to earn. In order to do this one must possess the wisdom to pursue those things, which will enhance one's value to his employer. One cannot begin to earn more income without the wisdom to seek sound advice and one cannot hope to maintain or increase one's wealth without the wisdom to remember where he came from and how he came to improve himself.

Determination

The principles laid forth in this book seem simple enough to follow. However, if one is to be successful and acquire great wealth then one must also possess a certain amount of determination. The principles are easy enough to understand but like several of the stories illustrate it takes time, patience, and perseverance in order to put them completely into practice.

At the end of chapter two the author notes that not all the men who went to hear Arkad's advice ended up following it. Many of them failed to understand the meaning of what Arkad had told them, while others were too lazy to actively work at putting his advice into practice for themselves. Only a few of the men took the time to ponder Arkad's story and only these few were able to increase their wealth. Like Pirate and Zabado many people refused to alter their personal views and accept another way of thinking. Their determination was focused in the wrong area. Those who never achieved great wealth were given the opportunity but failed to see that wealth cannot be handed over so easily. One must put forth a certain amount of effort in order to entice wealth to visit them. Like the men decide after discussing the goddess of luck - "men of action are favored by the goddess of good luck."

Sharru Nada viewed himself as the luckiest man in Babylon but he did not become lucky without putting forth a considerable amount of his own effort. Sharru Nada could have chosen to forget the advice of Megiddo like Pirate and Zabado did, but instead he chose to heed the farmer's advice and to put it into practice. By being determined and working hard Sharru Nada was able to save money for himself despite being a slave. His hard work also gained him the notice of Arad Gula who eventually purchased Sharru Nada's freedom. Sharru Nada did not sit idly by and wait for someone to rescue him.

Instead Sharru Nada determined to actively work towards securing his freedom and improving his station in life even when he was at his lowest point working for his the canal foreman.



Style

Point of View

The story is told from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. The stories have been collected and structured in such a way as to form a coherent whole but who exactly wrote down the tales is unknown. Each story is told as if the author is speaking to a room full of men in the same manner as Arkad did at the Temple of Learning.

The only departures from this point of view come in chapters nine and eleven. In chapter nine a set of letters from one professor to another relates the story of Dabasir's rise from poverty to wealth. In this instance the professor's letter draws the reader out of the past and into the present. The professor has translated tablets inscribed by Dabasir and used Dabasir's experiences to alter his own financial situation for the better. The professor writes to his colleague to tell him about how the ancient wisdom has helped him thousands of years later.

In chapter eleven the author provides a historical sketch of Babylon. The chapter tells the reader how Babylon rose to greatness, maintained that status, and then suddenly fell to enemies as the result of a silly mistake. The reader learns that Babylon was a city of determined people who, lead by a series of honorable kings, worked together to create the richest city in the world. This is also an interesting departure from the ancient tales and allows the reader to process the reality of what Babylonians accomplished during their long career.

Setting

The story takes place in ancient Babylon. Babylon is remembered as being one of the richest nations in the world. What is most intriguing about the wealth of Babylon is that every citizen was given the opportunity to amass great wealth because the king believed that all his people should be able to prosper and not just a select few controlling the wealth.

Because of their immense wealth people often believe that Babylon was situated in a lush tropical setting, but the cities location was quite the opposite. Babylon sat on the banks of the Euphrates in a dry valley. The Babylonians were industrious and inventive people and they devised a system for irrigating the fertile lands around the city. Because of their attention to detail and their excellent record keeping, scientists have been able to reconstruct a large amount of information regarding Babylonian society. This wealth of information was buried for many years under the sands of the region. Scientists thought that random heaps of earth were nothing more than sand deposits but once they started to research the area the scientists uncovered the city's ancient ruins.



Language and Meaning

For the most part the language of the story is straight forward and easily understood. The reader may have some difficulty with the somewhat archaic language of the book. For example some of the words are no longer used in modern language and take a little bit of consideration to recognize their meaning. Such language is probably used to mimic the speech of ancient Babylonians. Words such as hath, thee, thou, bethought, thy and thine are not regularly found in modern writing; however this style of speaking lends an authoritative air to the story.

The book could be broken into individual stories by chapter. While the characters and events in each chapter flow together to form a whole, each chapter could be read separately and still convey the overall message of the book. The principles of Babylonian finance are reiterated in each chapter so that the reader is never at a loss for the main idea.

The simplistic style of the stories makes them easy to understand despite being a book about making wise financial decisions. The reader will note, like Dr. Shrewsbury, how the advice of a man from thousands of years ago is still applicable today. The ancient Babylonians were able to devise a simple system for each member of society to have the opportunity to increase their wealth but somehow over the years the world has forgotten the success of this ancient society and turned away from their sound financial practices. Many people may end up dismissing Clason's book because the material he presents is so old and so simple but those who heed the advice of Arkad and choose to ruminate on these Babylonian principles should be able to increase their wealth.

Structure

The story is told in eleven chapters with a brief foreword by the author. The foreword explains why the author chose Babylon as the example for his book and why these ancient principles are still relevant to today's readers. Each chapter is headed only by a title with no numbers to denote progression. The chapter titles give the reader an idea of who the main character of the chapter will be.

Most of the chapters are Babylonian stories that teach a lesson. It is unclear whether the stories are actually true or were formulated just to teach the reader about the Babylonian principles of finance. Chapter nine is told through letters from Dr. Shrewsbury to Dr. Caldwell. This chapter creates a bridge between the ancient stories and modern day. Dr. Shrewsbury received a request from Dr. Caldwell to translate a set of clay tablets and Shrewsbury is sending back his reply. However, Shrewsbury does not merely send back a translation of his findings but relates how his work on the tablets has affected his own life. Dr. Shrewsbury shows readers that the ancient principles can be applied to their own modern lives.

The final chapter in the book gives the reader a brief history of Babylon and the contributions this great society made to the world. It is amazing to read about how a

civilization thousands of years ago was so technologically advanced. Many readers may assume that ancient peoples were ignorant savages but the relics left behind by the Babylonians show how forward thinking these people were. It is almost saddening to realize how much of the ancient wisdom has been forgotten.

The only thing that the reader may have difficulty with in this book is in understanding some of the archaic language. The older style of speaking is unfamiliar to many readers and may pose a slight stumbling block. However, the meaning behind the words is easily conveyed to the reader. In addition, the author has the character's who present the five laws of gold and the seven cures for a lean purse explain these principles in another way. This is done in the book for the benefit of the speaker's listeners but functions also to provide clarification for the reader.



Quotes

"Why cannot we have our just share of the good thing so plentiful for those who have the gold with which to buy them?" Chapter 1, pg. 5

"Thou makest me to realize the reason why we have never found any measure of wealth. We never sought it." Chapter 1, pg. 7

"Then he looked at me shrewdly from under his shaggy brows and said in a low, forceful tone, 'I found the road to wealth when I decided that *a part of all I earned was mine to keep.*' Chapter 2, pg. 13

"Deride not what I say because of its simplicity. Truth is always simple." Chapter 3, pg. 27

"That what each of us calls our 'necessary expenses' will always grow to equal our incomes unless we protest to the contrary." Chapter 3, pg. 29

"Gold in a purse is gratifying to own and satisfieth a miserly soul but earns nothing." Chapter 3, pg. 31

"Gold in a man's purse must be guarded with firmness, else it be lost." Chapter 3, pg. 33

"No man's family can fully enjoy life unless they do have a plot of ground wherein children can play in the clean earth and where the wife may raise not only blossoms but good rich herbs to feed her family." Chapter 3, pg.35

"Therefore do I say that *it behooves a man to make preparation for a suitable income in the days to come, when he is no longer young, and to make preparations for his family should he be no longer with them to comfort and support them.*" Chapter 3, pg. 37

"That man who seeks to learn more of his craft shall be richly rewarded." Chapter 3, pg. 41

"Action will lead thee forward to the successes thou dost desire." Chapter 3, pg. 58

"To him who is without knowledge of the five laws, gold comes not often, and goeth away quickly." Chapter 4, pg. 67

"If you desire to help thy friend, do so in a way that will not bring thy friend's burdens upon thyself." Chapter 5, pg. 78

"Youth would take short cuts to wealth and the desirable things for which it stands." Chapter 5, pg. 82

"Therefore, be not swayed by the fantastic plans of impractical men who think they see ways to force thy gold to make earnings unusually large." Chapter 5, pg. 87



"Being young and without experience I did not know that he who spends more than he earns is sowing the winds of needless self-indulgence from which he is sure to reap the whirlwinds of trouble and humiliation." Chapter 8, 97



Topics for Discussion

Arkad's advice seems unbelievably simple but most people find it incredibly hard to follow. Why do you think this is?

Arkad's advice is re-stated several times in different ways throughout the book. Does the repetition help drive the point home or is it merely beating a dead horse?

Discuss the wisdom behind the seven cures for a lean purse. Do you think they can be successfully implemented?

Would Dabasir's method for repaying his debts work in today's society?

Discuss the quote, "Youth is ambitious." What does it mean? Is it a positive or negative statement?

Why do you think Arkad gives Nomasir ten years to try and make his fortune? Would a shorter or longer amount have time made a difference in the outcome?

An entire chapter is devoted to the discussion of luck. Do you agree or disagree with the conclusion reached at the end of the chapter?

Despite Babylon's grand existence it vanished rather quickly and simply. What do you make of King Nabonidus' lack of foresight in failing to shut the city gates behind him? How does this short coming contrast with the intellectual records found by scientists?

Arkad offers up the seven cures for a lean purse and the five laws of gold. How are these twelve principles similar and how are they different?

Do you think that the seven cures and the five laws are meant to be enacted all at once or are they intended to be a series of steps that one should follow in relative order?

The keeping back one-tenth of one's earnings is similar to the Biblical standard of giving ten percent back to the church. Which idea do you think came first and is there any room in Arkad's principles for the Biblical standard?

Sharru Nada considers him the luckiest man in Babylon. How does his story relate or compare to the discussion of the Goddess of Luck in chapter four?