

*ASSYRIAN AND BABYLONIAN INSCRIPTIONS IN
THEIR BEARING ON THE OLD TESTAMENT
SCRIPTURES.*

III. THE DELUGE.

HERE also, as in the case of the narrative of the Creation, the earlier students of Comparative History had been struck with the parallelism presented by the traditions of other nations. The most familiar of these was naturally the Greek myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha as related by Ovid in his "Metamorphoses" (i. 260-415). Here also the sins of mankind are visited by a plague of waters, and men and brutes are alike destroyed; and the flood covers the earth, and Deucalion, with his wife Pyrrha, alone remains, as the only righteous man.

"Non illo melior quisquam, nec amantior æqui
Vir fuit, aut illa metuentior ulla deorum."

"None more than he more virtuous, none who loved
The right more truly, and than she were found
None walking firmer in the fear of God."

They are saved in a boat which floats through the surging seas, and for their sakes Jupiter bids the waters abate; and first the summits of the mountains, and then the forests and the fields, reappear, and the boat rests upon the summit of Parnassus. From them the earth is replenished, as the story ran, by stones which they threw upon the ground, and which became men and women, while the earth spontaneously brings forth the lower forms of animal life, and enters on another stage of its history. As the "Metamorphoses" were written after Ovid had been banished to Pontus, it is not improbable that they may represent an Asiatic tradition. If such a tradition is shewn on independent evidence to have existed in or near the region of his exile, that probability will approximate proportionably to a certainty.

In one form of the Deucalion legend it may be noted that he is said to have sent forth a dove to see whether the waters were abated (Plut. *De Solert. Anim.*, *Opp.*, p. 1783, c.) ; but this feature may have been derived, looking to the date of Plutarch, either from the Chaldæan or the Jewish traditions. It is significant from this point of view that no trace of the Deluge story is found in earlier Greek writers, like Homer, Hesiod, and Herodotus, though the latter names Deucalion as one of the first kings of the Hellenes.

The legends of Phrygia supply the missing link. They told, as related by Stephanus of Byzantium, of a righteous prophet named Annacos, whom Ewald (*Gesch. Israel.*, vol. i. p. 356) identifies with Enoch, and who prophesied of the flood that was coming on the earth. He lived, the legend ran, for three hundred years, and was worshipped at Iconium. In close connexion with this tradition we have the well-known coins or medals which were struck at Apamæa Kibôtos (the last word is the same as that used in the LXX. for the "ark" of Noah), in the times of the Emperors Severus, Philip, and Macrinus, and which represent on their reverse two male and female figures, seated in a boat or open chest, and then emerging from it. On the chest appears the name of *NΩE* = Noah, and two birds are hovering over it (Eckhel, *Doctr. Numism.*, vol. iii. pp. 132-139) ; and one of the birds bears an olive-branch in its claws. It is obvious that this looks like an attempt to represent, much after the same fashion of art as we see in mediæval illuminations or stained glass windows, the history of the Deluge as given in Genesis viii. 8-11, and no other interpretation of the device has been suggested that commends itself as at all tenable. The late date of the medals, however, forbids our seeing in them direct evidence of a tradition independent of the Bible. By that time Jews had found their way into all parts of Asia Minor with the LXX. version of the Old Testament, and its story may have coalesced

with the floating earlier legends of Deucalion. Professor Rawlinson¹ has suggested a sufficiently probable explanation of the fact, that Apamæa, rather than any other city, may have borne the name Kibôtos as = ark, or treasure chest, on account of the stored up wealth for which it had been famous. Jewish or other readers of the LXX. would be attracted by the word which was so closely associated with the history of the Deluge in that version, and would easily be led to think that it pointed to some connexion. Armenia and Phrygia were not far remote. The latter was believed (Herod., ii. 2) to be the cradle of the human race, and it might seem a natural step to place the mountain on which the ark rested in Phrygia; all the more natural if there was already a deluge tradition floating there in the memories of men. That Apamæa was about this time popularly identified with the ark's resting place is sufficiently seen from a passage in the *Sibylline Oracles* (i. 268-274), quoted by Professor Rawlinson:

“There is a mount in the dark Phrygian land,
Lofty, far-stretching, Ararat 'tis named;
Since on that mount 'twas fated that mankind
Should find salvation and much wished-for rest;
There Marsyas, mighty stream, doth take his rise,
And there, when the floods sank, on the high crest
Rested the ark.”

The Marsyas, it may be noted, rises close to Apamæa.

To the general diffusion of the Biblical tradition from the date of the LXX. version we may fairly ascribe the knowledge of the deluge history which we find in Hecatæus of Abdera, Nicolaus of Damascus, and other Greek writers; and with these second hand reports of an earlier narrative we need not further concern ourselves.

The case is far otherwise with the latest addition to the evidence of a primitive and widely diffused narrative of a

¹ “Bible Educator,” vol. i. p. 35.

deluge, running parallel to that of Genesis vi.-viii., which has been brought to light by Mr. George Smith in the legends of the Assyrian hero, Izdubar, whom he identifies with Nimrod.¹ His version of those legends has been published both in his "Chaldæan Account of Genesis," and in an enlarged and revised form in "Records of the Past" (vol. vii. pp. 133-147). The tablets on which the legends are engraved belong, in Mr. Smith's judgment, like those that record the history of Creation, to the reign of Assurbanipal, in the seventh century B.C.

The earlier tablets, which are much mutilated, seem to have related various adventures of Izdubar, more or less after the type of those of Hercules. On the tenth he crosses the waters of death and reaches the abode of the immortals, where he finds Hasisadra, whom Mr. George Smith ("Chaldæan History," p. 257) identifies with Noah. From him he hears the tale of the Deluge, and this is given in the Eleventh Tablet. The translation of that Tablet as given in *R. P.* (vol. vii. pp. 135-149), is too long for insertion *in extenso*, and in many parts is very fragmentary. I content myself with the passages which present the most striking parallelisms with the Genesis history.

Hasisadra after this manner also said to Izdubar,
Be revealed to thee Izdubar the concealed story,
And the judgment of the gods be related to thee.

* * * * *

The God, Lord of Hades,
Their will be revealed in the midst . . . and
I his will was hearing and he spake to me.

* * * * *

. . . Make a ship, after this
. . . I destroy the sinner and life.

Cause to ascend in the seed of life, all of it, to the midst of the
ship.

¹ The identification is, however, far from being accepted generally by Assyriologists.

The ship which thou shalt make,
 600 (?) cubits shall be the measure of its length
 60 (?) cubits the amount of its breadth and its height.
 . . . Into the deep launch it.

I perceived and said to Hea my Lord :
 "Hea my Lord, this that thou commandest me

. . . I will perform, it shall be done.
 I shall be derided by young men and old men."

Hea opened his mouth and spake and said to me his servant :

* * * * *
 "Enter into it, and the door of the ship turn,
 Into the midst of it thy grain, thy furniture and thy goods,
 Thy wealth, thy women servants, thy female slaves and the young
 men,

The beasts of the field, the animals of the field, all I will gather
 and

I will send to thee and they shall be enclosed in thy door.

* * * * *
 Fourteen measures it measured . . . over it
 I placed its roof . . . I enclosed it.

I rode in it on the sixth time, examined its exterior on the seventh
 time,

Its interior I examined on the eighth time,
 Planks against the waters within it I placed.

I saw the rents and the wanting parts I added,
 Three measures of bitumen I poured over the outside.

* * * * *
 All I possessed, the strength of it, gold,
 All I possessed, the strength of it, the seed of life, the whole.
 I caused to go up into the ship all my male servants and my
 female servants,

The beasts of the field, the animal of the field, the sons of the
 people, all of them I caused to go up.

A flood Shamas¹ made and
 He spake saying, "In the night I will cause it to rain from
 heaven,

Enter into the midst of the ship and shut thy door."

* * * * *
 I entered into the midst of my ship and shut my door.

¹ Shamas = the Sun-God.

* * * * * * *

The raging of a storm in the morning
 Arose, from the horizon of heaven extending far and wide,
 VUL¹ in the midst of it thundered, and
 NEBO and SARU went in front.
 The throne bearers went over mountains and plains,
 The destroyer NERGAL overturned,
 NINIP went in front and cast down,
 The spirits carried destruction,
 In their glory they swept the earth;
 Of VUL the flood reached to heaven,
 The bright earth to a waste was turned.
 The surface of the earth like . . . it swept;
 It destroyed all life from the face of the earth;
 The strong deluge over the people reached to heaven.
 Brother saw not his brother, it did not spare the people.

* * * * * * *

Six days and nights
 Passed; the wind, deluge, and storm, overwhelmed.
 On the seventh day in its course was calmed the storm, and all the
 deluge
 Which had destroyed like an earthquake,
 Quieted. The sea he caused to dry, and the wind and deluge
 ended.
 I perceived the sea making a tossing,
 And the whole of mankind turned to corruption,
 Like reeds the corpses floated,
 I opened the window, and the light broke over my face;
 It passed. I sat down and wept,
 Over my face flowed my tears.
 I perceived the shore at the boundary of the sea,
 For twelve measures the land rose.
 To the country of Nizir went the ship:
 The mountain of Nizir stopped the ship, and to pass over it it
 was not able.

* * * * * * *

On the seventh day in the course of it
 I sent forth a dove and it left. The dove went out, and turned
 and

¹ Vul, Nebo, Ninip, Saru, Nergal = names of Assyrian deities.

A resting place it did not find, and it returned.

I sent forth a swallow and it left. The swallow went and turned,
and

A resting place it did not find, and it returned.

I sent forth a raven and it left;

The raven went and the corpses on the water it saw, and

It did eat, it swam and wandered away, and did not return.

I sent the animals forth to the four winds. I poured out a
libation.

I built an altar on the peak of the mountain :

By seven jugs of wine I took ;

At the bottom of them I placed reeds, pines, and spices,

The gods collected at its burning,¹ the gods collected at its good
burning.²

It is sufficiently obvious that this and the Genesis history of the flood must have had a common source, or that the former must have been a legendary, and, so to speak, mythicised version of the latter. The agreement in many details, such as the command to make the ark (Gen. vi. 13, 14), the proportions of its structure (Gen. vi. 15), its being covered with pitch within and without (Gen. vi. 14), the destruction of all flesh (Gen. vii. 21), the sending forth of the raven and the dove (Gen. viii. 7-11), the resting of the ark upon a mountain (Gen. viii. 4), the sacrifice of sweet savour when the floods abated (Gen. viii. 21), is, it will be admitted, singularly striking. The independence of the two narratives is, on the other hand, shewn : (1) in the addition of the swallow to the raven and the dove in the Chaldæan narrative ; (2) in the shorter duration of the deluge ; (3) in the touching picture of Hasisadra weeping when he leaves the ship and sees the floating corpses ; and (4) in the absence of any allusion to the rainbow as the sign of the covenant that the great catastrophic judgment being over, the reign of law, the orderly succession of winter and summer, seed-time and harvest, should not cease (Gen. viii. 22).

¹ "Herbs." G. Smith.

² "Savour." G. Smith.

To this Chaldæan version of the story we are now able to trace the narrative of the Deluge given by Berosus, which had previously been looked upon as derived from the Genesis history, but which now appears, like his account of the Creation, to be based upon the tablets of Assurbanipal. It will be sufficient to give a summary of that narrative. The Deluge, he relates (Cory's *Ancient Fragments*, pp. 26-29), happened in the reign of Xisuthrus (the name is probably a Græcised form of the Hasisadra of the Izdubar legends). He is told by Kronos (obviously given as the Greek equivalent for the Assyrian god Hea), to build a vessel, to fill it with provisions, and to enter it with birds and beasts of various kinds. He built a ship five stadia in length and two in breadth. He also sent out birds when the waters abated, and at first they found no resting place, the second time they came back with mud upon their feet, the third time they returned not. The vessel rested upon the peak of a mountain in Armenia, and in the time of Berosus the bitumen which was scraped off from what was shewn as its relic was in high esteem as a charm. Xisuthrus, on leaving the ark, offered sacrifices to the gods, and then disappeared, and when men sought him, a voice came from heaven and told them that he had passed (like the Hasisadra of the Izdubar legends) to the abode of the gods, and the people who were left went from the land of Armenia, where the ark had rested, to Babylon.

What was probably a later version of the same tradition is quoted by Josephus (*Ant.*, i. 3), from the history of Nicolaus of Damascus, a Greek writer of the time of Augustus: "There is a great mountain in Armenia, over Minyæ, called Baris" (a Greek word for "ark") "upon which it is reported that many who fled at the time of the Deluge were saved, and that one who was carried in an ark came on shore on the top of it, and that the remains of the timber were a great while preserved. This might be the

man about whom Moses, the legislator of the Jews, wrote." Nicolaus, it may be mentioned, was on terms of intimacy with the Herodian family (Jos., *Ant.*, xii. 3, 9; xvii. 9), and therefore likely to have become familiar with the Jewish records.

The account, though much briefer, agrees with that of Berossus as to a mountain in Armenia having been the resting place. In the local name which was either the starting point of the tradition, or rose out of it, we find a parallel to the Kibôtos (= ark) which was attached to the name of Apamæa, and are led to the inference that from the time of Alexander the Great (the date of Berossus) to that of Septimius Severus (the date of the Apamæan medals) there were two cities in the same region of Asia which sought to identify their history with that of the Deluge, and boasted of possessing the relics of the vessel in which the fathers of mankind had been preserved.

Parallel traditions have been found, it may be added, in Persia, India, China, and in connection with different forms of faith. In that of Persia the flood is sent by Ormuzd to punish the evil works of Ahriman. In China, Fuh-he, who occupies a position like that of Prometheus as the author of civilization, appears as having escaped from the waters of a flood with his wife, three daughters, and three sons, by whom the desolated world was repopled (Hardwicke, *Christ and Other Masters*, ii. 18, ed. 1863); and in a paper communicated by Dr. Gutzlaff to the Asiatic Society (*Journal*, vol. xvi. p. 79), he describes a relief in a Buddhist temple where Kwan-Yin the goddess of mercy looks upon a lonely figure, the counterpart of Noah, floating in an ark with dolphins swimming around him, and a dove with an olive branch flying towards him. The Indian legend given in the Mahabharata relates that Brahma appeared to the righteous Manu, and bids him prepare for the coming deluge by building a ship, and placing in it all kinds of seeds

with the seven Rishis or holy beings. Brahma himself in the shape of a horned fish draws the ark, and finally lands it on the loftiest summit of Mount Himarat (= Himalaya), where the ship is made fast, and the mountain receives the name of Naubaudhena (= ship-binding), and Manu empowered by Brahma creates a new race of men to fill the earth. (Hardwicke, *Christ and Other Masters*, iii. 312, ed. 1863.) Even the Koran account, though naturally based upon the Jewish record, introduces features, which seem derived from some form of the Chaldæan legends, such as the derision which Noah encountered when announcing the coming of the flood, and the resting of the ark not on Ararat, but on *Al-djudi*, which is identified with the Gordyeen or Kurdistan mountains on the borders of Armenia and Mesopotamia.¹ (*Sura xi.*)

IV. THE TOWER OF BABEL.

It was to be expected that some traces of this history also, on any hypothesis of a connexion between the Genesis record and that of Chaldæan writers, would be found in the records left by the latter. No such trace, however, is found in the extant fragments of the Chaldæan historian Berosus, or in the works of any other Greek writer who had access to Babylonian traditions. In the absence of any such evidence, Mr. George Smith's discovery of a tradition which is obviously the counterpart of the Biblical story has a special claim to attention. The tablet marked as K. 3657 in the British Museum is in a very broken condition, and most of the lines are incomplete. It has been translated by Mr. George Smith in his "Chaldæan Account of Genesis,"

¹ I must acknowledge my obligations for the facts brought together in this paragraph to Dean Perowne's elaborate article on Noah in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible." Other traditions among the Mexicans, the Cherokees, and the Fiji islanders mentioned by him I pass over, interesting as they are in themselves, as having no direct connexion with the Chaldæan legends.

p. 160, and by Mr. W. St. Chad Boscawen in *Records of the Past*, vol. vii. p. 129. I quote from the latter, noting the variations which it presents on a comparison with the former. It evidently follows on an account of the building of a tower by a sinful people.

COL. I.

. . . of them the father
 (The thoughts) of his heart were evil,
 . . . the father of all the gods he turned from.
 . . . Babylon corruptly to sin went¹
 Small and great mingled on the mound,²
 . . . Babylon corruptly to sin went,
 Small and great mingled on the mound.

COL. II.

The king of the holy mounds,³ . . .
 In front and Anu lifted up . . .
 To the good god⁴ his father.
 Then his heart also . . .
 Which carried a command⁵ . . .
 At that time also . . .
 He lifted it up . . .
 Dav-kina.
 Their (work) all day they founded.
 To their stronghold in the night
 Entirely an end he made.⁶
 In his anger also the secret counsel he poured out,
 To scatter abroad his face he set,
 He gave a command to make strange their speech,
 . . . their progress he impeded.

Col. III. is reported by Mr. Boscawen to be too mutilated for translation, and he proceeds to give what is decipherable

¹ "Babylon brought to subjection." G. S.

² "Small and great he confounded their speech." G. S.

³ "Sar-tul-elli." G. S.

⁴ "Bel-sara." G. S.

⁵ "Which carried wisdom." G. S.

⁶ "My son I rise and . . . his number (?) entirely . . ." G. S.

from Col. IV., which records the intervention of NU-NAM-NIR, a name which he interprets as the god of "no rule" or lawlessness.

COL. IV.

NU-NAM-NIR went . . .
 Like heaven and earth he spake . . .
 His ways they went . . .
 Violently they fronted against him,
 He saw them and to the earth descended,
 When a stop he did not make
 Of the gods . . .
 Against the gods they revolted.¹
 . . . violence
 Violently they wept for Babylon,
 Very much they wept.

Imperfect as the narrative is, and great as are the variations in the two renderings, it is clear that where they agree, they speak of a tradition which presents many points of parallelism with the history of the tower of Babel in Gen. xi. 1-9. The local colouring of that history lies on the surface. The tower is raised in the land of Shinar, the Mesopotamia of Greek geographers. The builders use "slime" or asphalté for their work, to cement the baked bricks which they used instead of stone. The name of the city is connected with the confusion of tongues, the many mingled dialects for which that region was conspicuous.

To this reference to the Babel tradition M. Lenormant (vol. i. p. 23), following in the footsteps of M. Oppert, adds another scarcely less interesting. The site of the tower which was thus left incomplete has been identified by nearly all Assyriologists with the Birs Nimroud (= Tower of Nimrod) which still remains at Borsippa, in the immediate vicinity of Babylon, rising 153 feet above the level of the

¹ "The gods looked." G. S.

plain. In its ruins cylinders were found by Sir H. Rawlinson in 1854, which belong to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and record the work of that monarch in restoring what he describes as "the Temple of the Planet, which is the Tower of Babylon." It was constructed by him of burnt bricks, the material used in most of the Babylonian buildings. In older buildings, which represent the architecture of the period to which the Tower of Babel is referred, the bricks are found laid in mud, or bitumen, as in the Genesis history; and this, it is a reasonable inference, was probably the original structure of the Birs Nimroud itself.

As M. Oppert translates the inscription, the part which he supposes to refer to the Bible history runs thus.

"The Tower of the Seven Stages, the Eternal House, the Temple of the Seven Luminaries of the Earth (the seven planets), to which is attached the most ancient legend of Borsippa, which the first king built without being able to finish the work."

"Men had abandoned it since the days of the Deluge, speaking their words in disorder. The earthquake and lightning had shaken the crude brickwork of the revetment, the crude brick of the upper storeys had crumbled down into mere piles."

So rendered, the inscription seems to point to a tradition extant in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, that the great tower had been built soon after the deluge to which the Izdubar legends refer, that its erection had been interrupted by some catastrophic disaster, and that that interruption was accompanied by something like a confusion of tongues. On this assumption it is at least a conceivable hypothesis that Nebuchadnezzar's intercourse with the Jewish exiles at Babylon, and his acquaintance with their sacred records, had revived and, it may be, re-shaped the old Chaldæan legend as to the original construction of the Birs Nimroud.

It is right, however, to add that both Sir H. Rawlinson

(Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, ii. 485) and Mr. H. Fox Talbot (*R. P.*, vii. 73) give a translation of this part of the inscription which deprives it of the parallelism with the Biblical narrative presented by M. Oppert's version. I quote from the latter of the two :

“The Temple of the Seven Planets, which is the tower of Borsippa,
Which former kings had built ;
And raised it to the height of forty-two cubits,
But had not finished its upper parts,
From extreme old age had rotted away,
The watersprings beneath it had not been kept in order ;
The rain and the tempest
Had ruined its buildings :
The slabs that covered it had fallen off,
The bricks of its wall lay scattered in heaps.”

Here, it is obvious, we have what might have been true in the time of Nebuchadnezzar of any ancient building. There is no reference to the flood, as such, nor to any confusion of tongues, nor any violent interruption of the building. The tower had fallen into decay through defective drainage and the wear and tear of weather. It is right to add that M. Oppert adheres to his translation, after duly weighing the arguments urged against it.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.
