

The Old Testament in the light of the Literature of Assyria and Babylonia.

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GENESIS i. 6-8.

AND God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven.

We have already seen (p. 167) that the Assyrian *gipara* or *giparra* corresponds in meaning to the Heb. *קִפְפָּר*, "firmament," or, better, "expansion," and that this is the most probable rendering of the word.¹ The passage where the word occurs merely states that this *gipara* had not yet been compacted together. Jensen, however, has pointed out (*Kosmologie*, p. 305) that the Babylonian creation story gives a parallel to the dividing of "the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament" in the fourth tablet or chapter of the legend. After Merodach has fought with and overcome the dragon *Kirbiš-tiāmtu*,—"she who is) in the middle of the sea,"²—when he rested from the fight, he looked upon her corpse (*šalamtuš ibarri*):—

137. "He divided her also, like an ill-made shield, into two parts;
138. He set up half of her and covered (there-with) the heavens;
139. He pushed the barrier (into its place); set a watchman;
140. (And) ordained, 'Her waters are not to be allowed to come forth.'

¹ As an additional illustration may be quoted the similarly-formed *sapara*, from the Akk. *sa*, "line" or "net," and *para* "to extend," translated by the Assy. *šitu šuparurtu*, "outspread net." Merodach uses a *saparu*, in the creation legend, to catch the dragon *Kirbiš-tiāmtu*.

² This meaning of *Kirbiš-tiāmtu* is indicated by the glossary to a portion of the creation legend published in *W. A. J.* v. pl. 21, lines 40-43 *gb*, where the Sumerian words *ra*, *ra*, *ir*, and *erim* are translated by *šī*, *ina*, *kirbu*, and *tāmtim* (for *tiāmtim*) respectively, meaning "(she) who (is) in the midst of the sea." Cf. Jensen, *Kosmologie*, p. 300 ff.

Apparently one portion of the dragon (typifying the abyss of waters) remained below, whilst the other was placed above, forming "the waters which were above the firmament," which last is here represented, perhaps, by "the barrier" (*parku*) which Merodach pushed into its place (*išdud*).

It is to be noted that in the biblical account, though the waters which were above and below the firmament were originally one, yet no change of place seems to have happened such as that implied by the Babylonian legend, in which Merodach sets half of the dragon as a covering for the heavens (*mišluška iškunamma šanama ušallil*), unless, indeed, it be supposed that *Kirbiš-tiāmtu* filled the space that the Babylonians regarded as being occupied by both.

GENESIS i. 9, 10.

AND God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas.

As a parallel to this passage, Jensen quotes the immediately succeeding lines of the Babylonian creation legend, referring to Merodach measuring the abyss:—

141. "The heavens with (?) the (lower) regions he joined, and
142. Caused him (the watchman³) to stand before the abyss, the seat of Nudimmud (= the god Ea, lord of the sea).
143. Then the lord measured the extent of the abyss;
144. He set a great edifice, the likeness of *Ê-šara*—
145. The great edifice *Ê-šara* which he had made, the heavens—
146. He caused Anu, Bel, and *Êa* to be set in their places."

Jensen supposes that the Babylonian story shows at first the coming forth of the heavens, and then

³ See the translation of line 139.

the erection of the earth, over the ocean, from the other part (?) of *Tiāmat* (= the sea), thus agreeing with the Bible account, which shows the coming forth of the heavens, and then the water under the firmament dividing into water and dry ground; the only difference being that the Bible, instead of the ocean, in and under the earth, has substituted the geographical idea of "sea" (*Kosmologie*, p. 305). To support the comparison, he identifies *Ê-šara* with the earth, and translates lines 144, 145 as follows:—

"And erected a great building (*Grossbau*) like unto that one (*gleichwie jenen*) (*i.e.* heaven) [namely] *Ê-šara*,

The great building *Ê-šara*, which he built as¹ a vault of heaven."

Though *Ê-šara* may mean, in some places, "the earth," yet it seems to be doubtful here. Jensen points out (*Kosmologie*, p. 198) that *Anšar* (the god emblematic of the host of heaven, and, perhaps, the original of the Assyrian *Aššur*) who says, in another tablet of the same series, that he has made *Ê-šara* (*Ê-šara ša abnū anaku*, "Ê-šara, which I have made, (even) I"), is also represented as having made the earth (*êli kaḫḫaru ša ibnā kâtā [-ka]*, "over the earth which [thy] hands have made"), thus implying that *Ê-šara* and *kaḫḫaru*² are here practically synonyms. The *Ê-šara* of the above passages from the fourth tablet of the Babylonian creation story, however, seems to have been made by *Merodach*.³ In any case, the likeness between this section and verses 9, 10 is not by any means great, and we may safely say that we require more material before accepting or rejecting it as a parallel.

REMARKS UPON THE MORE NOTEWORTHY WORDS.

Line 137. The words I have translated as "an ill-made shield" are *nunu mašdē*. *Nunu* generally means "a fish," but as it is here used indeclinably, it is probably a foreign word. Jensen suggests some kind of weapon, but I have preferred "shield" on account of the shape, and because

¹ The word "as" ought to be in brackets, as it has no representative in the original.

² The proper word for earth is *ṣrītu*,—*kaḫḫaru* probably really means "ground."

³ *Merodach* occurs (as subject of the verbs used) in line 126, where he is mentioned by name (*Marduk*). He is mentioned again in lines 135 and 143 as *bēlu*, "the lord" (cf. "*Bel* and the Dragon").

an object of copper (or covered with copper or bronze) is implied. *Mašdē* seems to be the same word as *mašdē* in line 130, where I take *ina midī-šu (miṭi-šu) lā mašdē* to mean "with his weapon not ill-made" = "with his powerful weapon." (Jensen has "mit seiner grausamen (?) Waffe (?).")

Line 142. *Nudimmud* is one of the many names of *Êa*, god of the sea and of deep wisdom (see p. 166). As *Nudimmud* he is called god of making or forming (*nabnītu*⁴), referring, probably, to the teeming life of the element over which he ruled. His name is probably to be explained as formed of *nu*, "image," "form," *dim*, "to make," "create," and *mud*, "to make," "beget" (*W. A. J.* iv. pl. 62 [69], l. 51 ff.)—"maker of created forms." He also bears the similar name of *Nadimmud* as god of everything (*kalama*), but this form seems to refer to him more especially in connection with man, *na* having that meaning, though rarely used in that sense.

Lines 144 and 145. *Êšgalla*, "great edifice," is composed of *ēš*, "house" (see p. 166), and *gal*, "great." *Ê-šara* means, literally, "the house of the multitude," from *š*, "house" (see p. 166), and *šara*, "many." It might be just as well applied to the heavens (the abode of the heavenly host) as to the earth (the dwelling-place of multitudes of men), or a great temple (the place where many people assemble). The word "heavens" in line 145 is expressed by the usual poetic plural *šamamu* (see p. 166).

GENESIS i. 11, 12.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind: and God saw that it was good.

The creation of trees and plants is mentioned in the *non-Semitic* story of the creation (see *J. R. A. S.* for 1891, pp. 393-408), in which *Merodach*, after making mankind, the beasts of the field, the Tigris and the Euphrates, produces the various kinds of vegetation. Of this portion the following is a free translation:—

25. "Grass, the marsh-plant, the reed, and the forest he made,

⁴ See *W. A. J.* ii. pl. 58, l. 54.

- 26. He made the verdure of the plain,
- 27. The lands, the marsh, the thicket also,
- 28. Oxen, the young of the steer, the humped cow and her calf, the sheep of the fold,
- 29. Meadows and forests also."

NOTES UPON THE NAMES OF THE PLANTS.

Line 25. The word I have translated as "grass," *uša*, is, in the Akkadian version, *gi-uš*, the same group, evidently, as occurs in the Akk. *gi-uš-gil*¹ = Assy. *ušaštu* = *kinnu ša iššuri*, "birds' nest." *Uša*² (from the same root as *ušaštu*) was therefore, probably, a plant used by birds in building their nests. The "marsh-plant" is called, in Assyrian, *ditta appari*, in Akk. *gi-ḡenbur suga*. The Akk. characters with which it is written mean "the reed-seed-producing of the marsh," and correspond fairly with the Heb. עֵשֶׂב מְרִיטָה וְרֵעַ of Gen. i. 11. The "reed," *kanu* in Assy., is the Heb. קַנָּה. The Akk. is *giš-gi*, "tree-cane," perhaps equivalent to the "fruit-tree producing fruit," among which should, most likely, be included also the next, *kiša*, probably the collective of the Assy. *kištu*, "forest," with which rendering the Akk. group, *giš-tir-sir-ga*, agrees. The plural of *kištu*, namely, *kišatu*, "forests," occurs in line 29.

Line 26. "The verdure of the plain" is, in Assy., *urkit šeri*, and in Akk. *urig edina*.³ Compare the Heb. יָרֵק, "green," "verdure," יִרְקָה, "greenness," יִרְקָה הַשָּׂמַיִם, "greenness of grass." For *urkit šeri*, "the verdure of the plain," compare verse 12, "and the earth brought forth grass."

Line 27. The word for "thicket," *abu*, is probably connected with the Heb. אֲבוּ (root אָבַב). The Akk. is *giš-gi* (or *giš-gina*), "tree-cane."

Line 29. "Meadows and forests also." This phrase, in Assy., is *kiratu u kišatu-ma*, in Akk. [*giš*]-*tir giš-tir-bi-na-nam*. As *kiratu* and *kišatu* are represented, in Akk., by almost the same group, it is probable that the translation really is "woods and forests also." For *kišatu*, see above (note to *kiša* in line 25).

The agreement of the above passage from the Akkadian account of the creation with the corre-

sponding portion of the biblical account is very close indeed. It is worthy of note, on the other hand, that the words and roots used to relate this portion of the story, as well as the form in which it is expressed, differ entirely in the two versions.⁴

GENESIS i. 14-18.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: and let them be for lights . . . to give light upon the earth, etc.

The fifth tablet of the Babylonian account of the creation describes, on the obverse, the formation of the heavenly bodies as follows:—

1. "He⁵ built the stations of the great gods—
2. Stars their likeness—he caused the constellations to be placed,
3. He designated the year, he outlined the (heavenly) forms⁶—
4. Twelve months, three stars each, he caused to be placed,
5. From the time when the year began, for constellations.
6. He founded the station of Nibiri, to make known their limit,
7. That none might err, nor wander.
8. He placed with him the station of Bêl and Êa,
9. He opened then the great gates on both sides,
10. He strengthened the lock left and right,
11. Between it he placed the zenith.
12. Nannaru he caused to shine,—he ruled the night;
13. He then indicated him as a thing of the night. To make known the days (time),
14. Monthly, without failing, he surrounded (him) with a ring,
15. At the beginning of the month to shine in the evenings,
16. The horns were to shine to make known the division⁷ (of time)—
17. On the seventh day with a half-ring.

⁴ The Assy. translation which accompanies the Akk. original is, of course, referred to in this comparison.

⁵ Merodach.

⁶ I here read *mišrata umaššir (uāššir)*, with Fried. Delitzsch.

⁷ Here I read *zu[ma?]mi* (not *šamami*), the first character being certainly *za (ša)*.

¹ The prefix *gi* indicates a plant of the cane-kind—grass or reed.

² The Akk. *uš* in *gi-uš* is probably connected with this.

³ This word is explained by Prof. Fried. Delitzsch as the original of the biblical Eden.

18. 'At rest (?) mayest thou then remain, a half (?) monthly (?),
 19. When (?) the sun (is) in the foundation of heaven, in thy [presence?],
 20. Cause . . . to be formed and make . . .
 21. . . . is caused to approach the path of the sun
 22. . . . mayest thou then remain, may the sun be opposite
 23. . . . a sign, seek her path.
 24. Cause . . . to be formed, give judgment.'

(After this are the ends of two lines, and then the remainder of the tablet is wanting, except a portion of the last four lines of the reverse.)

The natural difficulties of the text are greatly increased by its fragmentary state; but even as it is, it gives much valuable information. In accordance with the mythological idea running through the whole, the heavenly bodies are identified with the various deities of the Babylonian Pantheon—the sun being Šamaš, the sun-god; the moon (*irišu*, when mentioned apart from the god with whom it was identified) being Nannaru, "the illuminator"; the planet Jupiter being Nibiru, "the ferry" (so Jensen, *Kosmologie*, p. 128),—and their use, "for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years," described at length. First comes the forming of the station of the great gods, and the fixing of the year of twelve months, and the stars governing them. The station of Nibiru, or Jupiter, who was to prevent them (the stars) from going astray, is next mentioned; then the station of Bél and Éa (according to Jensen, the north pole and the "southern point"), and the great gates (of the rising and setting sun?) on both sides, with their locks left and right, and the zenith between them. "The Illuminator he made to shine, he ruled the night." "To make known the days, monthly, unceasingly, he surrounded (him) with a ring" (compare "*the lesser light to rule the night, to rule over the day and over the night*"). This portion of the Babylonian creation legend ends with instructions, apparently addressed to the moon, but too doubtful to enable much to be made out with certainty. Were the text complete, the Babylonian idea of the universe, as well as the

extent of their astronomical knowledge at the date of the composition of the legend, would probably be fully revealed.

REMARKS UPON THE MORE NOTEWORTHY WORDS.

1. "The station of the great gods" is expressed by $\ll \text{𐎶 𐎶} \rightarrow | \rightarrow | \rightarrow | \text{𐎶} | \text{𐎶} \ll$,¹ *mansasa ūāni rabūti* (or *rabiuti*). *Mansasa* is really the accus. sing. of *manzazu*, from *nazāzu*, "to fix." It is very noteworthy that the group expressing the word "gods" is the sign for god ($\rightarrow |$) thrice repeated. The usual way of expressing the plural is by writing the character for "god," followed by the plural sign ($\rightarrow | \ll$). This writing with the character for "god" thrice repeated may, however, have something to do with the character for "star" (see the next paragraph). The number of the "great gods" was fifty, according to another tablet of the same series. The Oracle of Istar (*W. A. I.* iv. pl. 61 [68], col. ii. ll. 22 and 25) gives the number as sixty.

2. The ideograph for "star" (*kakkabu*, Heb. כוכב, Arab. كوكب) is $\rightarrow | \rightarrow | \rightarrow |$, and is composed of the sign for "god," $\rightarrow |$ (originally itself a picture of a star), three times repeated. When the character for "star" came into use to express the word "god," the character meaning "constellation," $\rightarrow | \rightarrow | \rightarrow |$ (three stars), was used for "star" (in the singular).

6. *Nibiru*, "the ferry" (root *ibēru*, "to cross") = Jupiter, the planet which passes continually backwards and forwards near the ecliptic (Jensen). This planet was placed, according to line 7, to prevent the stars from going astray; and another tablet of the same series says, when speaking of Nibiru, "like sheep let him pasture (direct, rule) the gods, all of them." Nibiru was, as we learn from the lists of gods, the same as Merodach himself, the creator and director of the universe.

The tablet above mentioned (that referring to Nibiru pasturing the gods) is also partly astral, and may be the continuation of the account of the creation and ordering of the heavenly bodies, translated above.

¹ In one copy the plural sign is omitted.