THE BABYLONIAN NOAH'S ARK.

THE Ninevite recension of the Babylonian version of the Deluge story has been well known, since the discovery in 1872, by George Smith, of the tablets relating to it, in the Library of Ašurbânipal. It has been published in the original cuneiform in the Fourth Volume of Sir H. Rawlinson's *Inscriptions of Western Asia*, second edition, p. 43 f.; and by Professor P. Haupt, as the eleventh tablet of the *Nimrod-Epos*, pp. 95–150. The latest renderings are by Professor H. Zimmern, in Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos*, p. 423 ff., and by Professor P. Jensen, in the Sixth Volume of Schrader's *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, p. 228 ff.

The ark which Atraḫasîs, Pir-napišti, or Xisuthrus, whom I will call Noah, was commanded to build, seems to have been 600 cubits long, 120 cubits wide, and 120 cubits deep; at least such is the estimate of the probabilities of the readings now possible of the tablet as given by Professor Haupt, in the *American Journal of Philology*, vol. ix. p. 419 f. These are only conjectural, however, in the case of the length, as the sign expressing 600 is no longer completely preserved, and therefore not certain. The divergence from the Biblical account may be reduced if we assume, with Professor Oppert, that the sign *ú* does not represent the cubit, but a half cubit. Both accounts would then make the length 300 cubits, but the other dimensions do not agree. However, Professor Jensen's renderings do not take the 120 ells in the mere sense of width and height. He gives, "According to its plan, its walls were 120 ells high, the sloping of its roof was correspondingly 120 ells." Reducing these lengths, according to Oppert's view, we have a height of 60 cubits, and a measure over its sloped roof of another 60 cubits. According to the Ninevite recension the ark was a house on a boat; it had a door,

and a window or embrasure to open. If we suppose that the heights of the two walls are taken together, we have an exact agreement with the Biblical account, each was 30 cubits high to the spring of the roof. It is clear that the boat or raft on which the house stood was larger than the house.

Professor Haupt, *Nimrod-Epos*, p. 121, has published a fragment of the same story, but in Babylonian script, and probably of much later date. This also has a doubtful 600, but confirms the figures 120 for the above measurements. It would be very singular if these versions should give exactly the same figures for each dimension; and it may well be that the discrepancies observed are due to the measurements given referring to dimensions reckoned in different directions.

The interest of the subject has induced me to make a further communication, which I believe bears upon it. In 1898, when copying "lists of animals," etc., for the Second Volume of my *Assyrian Deeds and Documents*, I came upon a singular tablet, K. 1520, described in the *Catalogue of the Cuneiform Tablets in the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum*, as a "list of animals, of certain dimensions, etc., probably an incomplete draught of a historical inscription." Although I could not regard it as such a list of animals, sold or entrusted to certain officials, as the lists published in *Assyrian Deeds and Documents* usually are, yet, after some consideration, I decided to publish the cuneiform text as No. 777 in my work. On page ix. of my preface, I stated that "No. 777 seems to give an estimate of the dimensions of Noah's Ark and a list of the animals in it." Professor Jensen, when he read this and had examined the text, expressed himself greatly interested, and suggested that it deserved to be given a wider publicity.

The tablet itself is a long oval, something like a pressed fig, about 4¼ inches long by 2 inches wide, and nearly

buck, and the hare are then named, and were clearly in pairs. One at least of these animals was sacred to Ištar, who plays such an important part in the Ninevite recension. Thus far we have just the animals that might be found on an Assyrian farm. They however include such wild animals as would not be likely to be kept in captivity. There are no ferocious beasts: the lion and jackal are absent, as well as the elephant.

Then follows a list of birds, nearly all of unknown kinds, but such as were offered in sacrifice to the gods. The list ends very significantly with, "the dove, the swallow and the raven." Whatever may have been the case with the dove, the swallow and the raven were not kept for food. In the Ninevite recension, it is precisely in this order that the Babylonian Noah, when the waters began to abate, sent forth from the ark, "first the dove, then the swallow, then the raven."

Hence, on a review of the whole case, I am inclined to think that my surmise was correct. We have here an estimate of the dimensions of Noah's Ark. No building in brick or stone was so large; even the tower of Babel is only estimated to be 80 cubits high. But, for some unexplained reason, this estimate of the size of Noah's Ark, enormous though it seems, is a persistent tradition of little real variation in its dimensions. This estimate accounts for the raft on which the house or ark proper was supported. The list of animals is too domestic to be intended for a menagerie, where elephants, lions, apes, etc., would surely have appeared. The "clean" food animals, cattle and sheep, appear in such a way as might easily lead to their enumeration by sevens. The animals "unclean," or not eaten, as the horse, the camel, the ass, etc., appear in pairs. The animals are, however, not all domestic: such wild animals are included as were sacred to the divinities most concerned in the story; and lastly, while the birds

include those offered to the gods, and therefore probably also used for food, they also include those named in the story, and which must accordingly find a place in the ark. It is difficult to see what other connexion could have prompted the inclusion of the swallow and the raven.

This is not the place to enter into a discussion of the ideograms, nor to pile up references to parallel passages: that I may reserve to my notes on the text in the Third Volume of my work; but it seems likely that this bare statement may be of service to those who are weighing the connexions between the Babylonian and Biblical traditions of the Deluge.

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