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The Archaeology of the Book of Genesis.

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Genesis ii. 1–3.

1. Host.—The word צָבָא, *ṣâbhâ'*, is the Assyrian *tsâbu*, 'warrior.' The usual word, however, in Assyrian for 'the hosts' of heaven and earth was *kissatu*; of these the supreme god, whether Assur or Bel-Merodach, was 'king,' while Nebo had the title of *pâqid kissat samê irtsitim*, 'marshaller of the hosts of heaven (and) earth.' The 'hosts' included the Igigi, or 'angels of heaven,' and the Anunnaki, or 'spirits of earth,' but they also comprised those minor deities who formed the army of the supreme Baal when regarded as a 'lord of battles.' The deified stars naturally counted among the hosts of heaven. The phrase went back to Sumerian times, its Sumerian equivalent being *sarra*, which denoted the multitudinous 'spirits' with which Sumerian belief had peopled the sky and lower world. In the Assyrian Epic of the Creation, *An-sar*, 'the heavenly host,' and *Ki-sar*, 'the earthly host,' are evolved from the primeval Lakhmu and Lakhamu, and are the immediate predecessors of the gods of light. They thus represent the end of the reign of chaos. The Hebrew writer, as usual, implicitly contradicts and rejects the polytheism of the Assyrian cosmology. While admitting the conception, which had too firm a literary footing to be got rid of, he declares that like the heavens and the earth the 'hosts' also had been created by God. An-sar and Ki-sar were no divine and self-created beings; the hosts which they represented were the creation and the servants of God. Like the Sumerian *sar* or *sarra* it will be noticed that 'host' is in the singular, not the plural, suggesting that it is a translation of the Sumerian word (in An-sar and Ki-sar) rather than of *kissatu*.

2. The Sabbath.—*Sabattu* was an Assyrian word, and was used to denote the 15th day of the month, *i.e.* the 14th day or end of the double week after the new moon, which elsewhere is defined as the 14th day of the month. In *W.A.I.* ii. 32. 16, it is defined as 'the day of rest for the heart,' and accordingly derived from the Sumerian *sa*, 'heart,' and *bat*, 'ceasing,' by the native scribes, whose ideas of etymology were on a level with those of the English lexicographers in the seventeenth century. Besides the 19th day, each 7th day of the month was accounted by the Babylonians so sacred that various kinds of work were forbidden to be done upon it, and the day was sometimes ideographically described as 'unlucky,' just as among the Jews an inspired book is said to 'soil' the hands. In a hemerology of the month Elul we read that on the 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st, and 28th days of the month, 'the shepherd of mighty nations must not eat flesh cooked at the fire or in the smoke, must not change the clothing of his body, must not put on white garments, must not offer sacrifice. The king must not drive in his chariot or issue royal decrees. The augur must not mutter in a secret place. Medicine must not be applied for the sickness of the body. For making a charm the day is not suitable' (*W.A.I.* iv. 32. 33). The prohibition to work was, therefore, almost as strict as among the Jews: no cooking, no change or washing of clothes, no driving, no law-making, no taking of medicine even in cases of sickness, no consultation of the augur, and no sacrificing even was allowed. Mr. Johns has shown (The Expository Times, xvii. pp. 566–7) that this prohibition to labour was observed to some extent in the age of Nebuchadrezzar, according to the evidence of the contract tablets, even among the 'people that knew not the law.' The contracts make it clear that less business was transacted at Babylon on these days than would have been the case until lately in modern Paris on a Sunday. The seven-day week was an old institution in Babylonia, and was closely associated with the festival of the new moon, the lunar month being divided into four quarters. When this became a month of thirty days in the Babylonian calendar, the first week came to consist of nine days. As Schrader long ago pointed out, the number seven was sacred in Babylonia, where the planetary deities were enumerated in the following order: (1) Moon-god, (2) Sun-god, (3) Nebo, (4) Istar, (5) In-aristi, (6) Bel-Merodach, (7) Nergal (*W.A.I.* ii. 48–54). Among the Assyrians a week of five days—the third part of a half-lunar month—was

employed. It should be added that the verb שבת is derived from the noun; in Assyrian the verb *sabâtu* has the meaning 'to complete,' and answers to the Heb. כלה.

3. The Days.—This verse states why the account of the Creation in six days was written; it was in order to explain the origin of the sanctity of the Sabbath. There is no trace of a creation in days either in the Assyrian Epic or elsewhere in the Assyro-Babylonian literature; it therefore seems probable that it was of Hebrew origin. If so, the successive acts of the Creation will have been distributed among a successive number of days in order to justify and consecrate the Sabbath rest of the Israelitish Law. In Dt 5^{15}, however, the justification and reason of the institution are that Israel had been delivered from the work of a slave in Egypt by its God, who in return had commanded it to observe the Sabbath. The Hebrew Sabbath is thus made to rest upon the national history, and to have been enjoined by the national God. In Ex 22^{11} it is still the national God who enjoins its observance, though the reason here is that He had rested after His six days' work of creation. It is only in Gn 2^{3} that the national God becomes Elohim, and the sanctification of the seventh day is thus extended *beyond the boundaries of Israel.*

SUMMARY OF RESULTS.

The results of an archæological examination of Gn 1^{1}–2^{3} are therefore as follows:—

1. The author has had before him not only the cosmological system of the Babylonians, but that particular form of it which has been incorporated into the Assyrian Epic. This is the form known to him along with the materialistic theory of evolution which is embodied in the introduction to the Epic, and the polytheistic and materialistic elements in it are implicitly contradicted and denied, like the historical misstatements of his predecessors which are similarly corrected by Thucydides in the introduction to his history.

2. The fundamental principles of the Babylonian cosmology are accepted, but emptied of all polytheistic and mythological associations.

3. The Hebrew narrative shows no trace of translation from a cuneiform document; it is purely Hebrew, and contains no Assyrian idioms and syntactical constructions.

4. A few evidences, nevertheless, of the use of an Assyro-Babylonian prototype have been allowed to remain; *Tehom* and perhaps *Ereẓ* could have been derived from the current language of Canaan, but in vv.$^{26.\ 27.\ 30}$ we have transliterations or translations from an Assyrian tablet to one of which a Hebrew gloss is attached. There is also evidence (v.^{28}) that the Hebrew text itself has been revised by later scribes.

5. The Hebrew writer lived in Palestine and not in Babylonia (vv.$^{11.\ 23}$).

6. The object of the narrative was not only the substitution of a monotheistic account of the creation for the polytheistic Babylonian cosmology of the schools, but more especially to explain why the Sabbath rest had been instituted. The Sabbath belonged to the Babylonians as well as to the Israelites; it had been ordained by God under His universal name of Elohim; but in certain respects the way in which it was kept was peculiar to the Israelites, and served to distinguish them from the heathen world.

7. Lastly, the narrative forms a complete whole, purely Hebrew in its language and spirit, and with a set object before it. The history of the Hebrew people is made to begin with the record of the origin and meaning of an institution which, as the centuries progressed, distinguished them more and more from the other nations of the world (see Is 56^{2} $58^{13.\ 14}$).