

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

the customs of the Tribes of Israel, and even published a book about it, some portions of which are reproduced here. But the value of the biography lies, as it ought to lie, in the exposition of the man's character. And to know such a man, as this book enables us to know him, is to add to the arguments in favour of the ultimate universality of the Gospel. For the character of Bishop Bompas could not have been the product of any other religion than Christianity, and it is the only character that one would entrust the dominion of the earth to.

Under the editorship of Professor Edward Arber, Mr. Elliot Stock has undertaken the issue of 'A Christian Library.' The first volume is *A Brief Discourse of the Troubles at Frankfort 1554 to 1558, Attributed to Whittingham* (5s. net). Why does Professor Arber begin with 'A Brief Discourse'? Because his purpose in the whole series is to 'implant and cherish in the hearts of all his readers a perfect detestation and execration of Compulsion in Religion and of Persecution for Religious Opinions.' He contributes an Introduction to the book. He also reprints the Life of Whittingham, written by a Student of the Temple about 1603, and he works through the whole of the Brief Discourse, adding notes in brackets.

Mr. Stock has also published *Short and Simple Family Prayers, with Bible Readings*, by an Englishwoman (2s. 6d. net).

The Rev. Samuel M. Zwemer is a missionary to

Muslims. And more than that, he is a missionary to other Muslim missionaries. He does his work as a missionary, and report says he does it well; and he writes books that others may know what Muhammadanism is. The title of his latest book is *Islam: A Challenge to Faith*. It is published at the Office of the Student Volunteer Movement in New York, and it is on sale in England at the Office of the Student Christian Movement, 95 Chancery Lane, W.C. The chief value of the book, for missionaries as for all others, lies in the fair and well-informed account it gives, first of the faith of Islam, and then of its ethics. Concentrate attention on its ethics. All men are directing their attention to ethics now. By its ethics Islam will stand or fall. And Islam can never rid itself of its ethics, or even greatly improve them.

Messrs. Watts have published a very cheap edition of Mr. P. Vivian's book *The Churches and Modern Thought*. What are the arguments that are now most relied upon by the open opponent of Christianity? They are, in Mr. Vivian's phraseology, 'the grave suspicions aroused by the study of ancient beliefs,' and 'irreconcilable difficulties connected with evolution.' The difficulties connected with evolution are apparently summed up in the phrase 'nature red in tooth and claw.' But that phrase has been discredited of late. The suspicions aroused by the study of ancient beliefs are another matter. But something depends upon their student.

## The Archaeology of the Book of Genesis.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. A. H. SAYCE, D.D., LIT.D., OXFORD.

### The Garden of Eden (Gn 2<sup>8-14</sup>).

**8. Eden.**—Edina or Edin, 'the plain,' was the Sumerian name of the cultivated part of Babylonia; the Semites borrowed the word under the form of *edinu*. 𒂗 is the Babylonian *ganû*, which also appears as *ginu* and *gannatu*, and is explained as meaning 'a planted field' (*meristum*, C.T. xii. 17. 37). *Ganû* itself is borrowed from the Sumerian *gan*. Babylonia was the original home of the enclosed garden or plantation; the early legal

documents are full of references to it, and it is represented by one of the primitive hieroglyphics which developed into the cuneiform characters.

The Heb. מִקְדֶּם, *mikkedem*, may represent the Babylonian *qudmis*, 'at the beginning,' but it more probably describes the position of 'the garden' as on the eastern side of the Babylonian plain. 'The man,' it will be noted, had already been formed before he was placed in the garden; indeed,

the *waw consecutivum* at the beginning of the verse implies that the garden was made subsequently to his creation. See v. 15.

**9. The Tree of Life.**—The Babylonian 'garden' was primarily a plantation of trees; vegetables were grown in the open fields. The 'tree of life' belongs to the first beginnings of Babylonian art, whence it made its way to Elam on the east, and to Palestine and Asia Minor on the west. In Assyria it assumed a curiously conventionalized form with knots and leaves, a winged genius being frequently represented on either side of it with a cone-like object in his hand. Whether the Babylonian tree of life was originally the vine or the palm is still doubtful: the Sumerian *gis ges-tin*, 'the tree of the drink of life,' usually signified 'the vine,' *ges-tin* being 'grape wine,' but it may have primarily denoted 'palm wine.' The Babylonians believed eating certain food would secure for them immortality and youth; Adamu, the first man, lost the gift of immortality by refusing to taste 'the food of life' (*akal baladhi*) and 'the water of life' (*mê baladhi*) when they were offered him by the supreme god Anu, and a snake stole away 'the plant' gathered by Gilgames, which 'made the old man young again.'

The tree of knowledge was called *kiskanû* by the Babylonians, from the Sumerian *gis-kin*, 'the tree of the oracle.' The fragment of a legend preserved in an exorcism tells us how it grew in Eridu, 'the good city':

In Eridu the dark *kiskanû* grew, created in the holy place, its appearance was as brilliant *lapis lazuli*, planted beside the Deep,

which is the path of Ea, filling Eridu with fertility.

Its<sup>1</sup> seat is the centre of the land,

its habitation the couch of the (primeval) goddess Nammu.

To the holy house like a forest does its shadow stretch into the midst whereof no man entereth.

Within it are the Sun-god and Tammuz;

between the mouths of the rivers which are on either side have the gods Ka-khegal and Si-tur-gal planted this *gis-kin* tree.

The *gis-kin* (with a slightly different spelling) is mentioned in several early Babylonian inscriptions. Eri-Aku or Arioch states that he had 'fulfilled the oracle of the *gis-kin* of Eridu,' Bur-Sin that he had 'restored to its place the *gis-kin* of Eridu,' and Sin-idinnam of Larsa that he had 'restored the oracle of the *gis-kin* of the Anunnaki,' or 'spirits of Earth.' One of the Semitic equivalents

<sup>1</sup> Not 'his,' i.e. Ea's, as has been suggested.

of *kin* was *tirtu*, the Heb. *thôrâh* (*W.A.I.* ii. 29, 44).<sup>2</sup>

The oracle tree seems to have been the cedar, since the exorcism in which the fragment relating to it has been embedded orders recourse to be had to 'the cedar tree, which destroys the power of the incubus and on whose core the name of Ea is inscribed,' in order to deliver a man who had been possessed by 'seven evil spirits.' Dr. Pinches (*The Old Testament*, p. 77) quotes a text in which we read: 'To the place of Ea, Samas, Merodach, and the Lady of Eden, which is the hidden place(?) of heaven and earth, the band of companions must not approach in order to decide the oracle; the message of the oracle they shall not reveal; their hands (must not touch?) the cedar tree beloved of the great gods.'

The 'good and evil' of which the oracle tree originally gave knowledge would have been good and evil fortune. A moral sense came afterwards to be attached to the words, and the Hebrew writer knows no other.

In the Babylonian poem translated above the tree is described as being in 'the eye' or 'centre of the earth.' In Gn 3<sup>3</sup> the tree of knowledge is similarly described as 'in the middle of the garden.' Here, however, it is the tree of life that is 'in the middle of the garden,' the mention of the other tree being somewhat awkwardly appended to it as if it were an afterthought. But if we turn the verse back into Assyrian, we find that the Hebrew בְּתוֹךְ, *bêthôk*, is merely a literal rendering of the Assyrian *ina libbi*, which really signifies simply 'within.' The original text would have been *ina libbi-sa GIS GESTIN û kiskanû*, 'within it were the tree of life and the tree of knowledge'; cp. line 8 of the Babylonian poem.

<sup>2</sup> In a good many instances what has been supposed to be a representation of the tree of life on the Assyro-Babylonian monuments is really a representation of the tree of knowledge. Thus, on a seal-cylinder figured in Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon* (p. 292), Ea, the god of wisdom, clad in the fish-skin of Oannes, stands beside the tree, while the winged solar disc is above it; and on a monument discovered by M. de Morgan at Susa, the tree is grasped by the hands of a human-headed fish. On a monument from Northern Syria, now in the Louvre, the tree is associated with a serpent, as it is on the famous seal-cylinder, first noticed by George Smith, which has been supposed to be a Babylonian representation of the Fall. At Taanach Dr. Sellin found an altar, on one side of which is the sacred tree, and on another a youth strangling a serpent (*Tell Ta'annek*, pp. 76, 77).

10. The River that 'flowed out of Eden' was the *Nâr Marrati*, or 'Salt River,' which, after passing through the marshes formed by the silt, became the Persian Gulf. In early times the Tigris and Euphrates, as well as the Kerkhah and Karûn, entered the 'Salt River' by different mouths. The 'Salt River' was itself a part of the ocean which surrounded the world, and into which the Tigris and Euphrates were supposed to flow in the distant north. Hence the mouths by which they entered the Gulf could also be described as 'heads,' the 'Salt River' with its flowing tide being regarded as the source of them.<sup>1</sup> The original mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates were a little to the east of the site of Ēridu; in the Babylonian poem, therefore, the tree of knowledge is stated to have been planted between them. A *nâr Edinna*, or 'River of Eden,' is mentioned by Gudea and Khammu-rabi, but it was probably a canal in the neighbourhood of Tello.

The Assyrian form of the latter part of the verse may have been *ipparis-ma ana irbit rêsi saknu*.

11. Pison is the Ass. *pisannu*, 'an artificial water-course,' and more specifically 'a shadûf.' Since Havilah was the northern desert of Arabia to the west of Babylonia, the river would seem to have been the Pallacopas canal, the Palukkâtu of the inscriptions, corresponding with the Nahr Hindliya, Shatt el-Khusif, and Shatt Atshân of to-day. I have shown in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, xviii. p. 234, that the part of Arabia immediately adjoining Babylonia was known as Tilmun in the early Babylonian epoch. The Hebrew Havilah, however, also included the western portion of the district, which extended to the frontier of Egypt and was called Melukkhah ('the Salt Desert') by the Babylonians.

12. It was from Melukkhah that Gudea imported gold. Meissner has pointed out that בְּדֹלַח, *bēddôlah*,

<sup>1</sup> The nature of the Babylonian conception will be understood by a reference to the early Babylonian map which I have published in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, xviii. p. 69, where the 'bird's beak' or inlet of the sea represents that part of the 'Salt River' which went out of Eden to water the garden. It is placed 'eastward in Eden,' and close to its head is a point which indicates the centre or *omphalos* of the world, and may correspond with the position assigned to the 'Garden.'

'bdellium,' is the Babylonian *budulkhu* (C.T. xiv. 33. 10), which is probably the resin of a tree. The *shohem* stone is the *sâmtu*, or 'blue-stone,' of the Babylonians, from *sîamu*, 'blue,' which is described as the characteristic product of Melukkhah, and is perhaps the turquoise of Sinai.

13. I have explained the name of the Gihon (which has been assimilated to the Hebrew גִּיחֹן) in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, xvii. pp. 470-471. Šakhan, which is given as a synonym of the Euphrates (W.A.I. ii. 35-36), should be read Gi-khan according to 93042, Bb. 28, *gikhan* being a Sumerian word for 'fishing-net,' which was borrowed by Semitic Babylonian in the form of *gikhinnu*.

Kush should be Kash, as in Gn 10<sup>8</sup>, i.e. the land of the Kassites. Whether this means their original home in Elam, or that portion of Babylonia which took its name from them after their conquest of the country, is doubtful.

14. Hiddekhel is the Sumerian Idigla, a dialectal form of Idigna, which in later Semitic Babylonian became Idiglat, with ה for the initial vowel, as in הֶכְחַל, *hēkhâl*, for *ekallu*, 'palace.' The Hebrew form, it will be noticed, has been taken from the Sumerian, which perhaps implies that the name was written ideographically in the cuneiform text which the Hebrew writer had before him.

Ashshur must be here the city of Assur (now Qala't Sherghât), not Assyria, since the Tigris is described as being on its east side. Hence the geography takes us back to a time before the rise of Nineveh. As it is necessary to define the course of the Tigris, it is further plain that the writer to whom the geographical description is due wrote for those who lived in Western Babylonia and were familiar with the Euphrates, but not with the Tigris; in other words, that they were natives of Ur or Babylon or of some other city which was situated on the Euphrates.

The geographical paragraph (vv. 11-14) reads like an extract from one of the numerous Babylonian geographical tablets, the phraseology being similar, and some of the tablets relating to the rivers of Babylonia. In Babylonia, it must be remembered, the word *nâru* (נָרוּ) signifies both 'river' and 'canal.'