

**A HEBREW DELUGE STORY IN  
CUNEIFORM, AND OTHER EPIC  
FRAGMENTS IN THE PIERPONT  
MORGAN LIBRARY, VOLUME V-3**

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TO MY COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND  
PROFESSOR CHARLES CUTLER TORREY





## FOREWORD

The title of this little monograph tells its own story, namely, that an ancient Hebrew deluge tradition written in cuneiform is here presented. It is not a recent discovery, nor is it the first time that it has appeared in print. It was first published a number of years ago, but owing to a faulty copy of the text originally presented, its importance has never been understood.

This story of the deluge which had found its way into Babylonia, where it was made to conform largely to the Akkadian dialect, fully betrays its origin; it came from the same source whence the Hebrew traditions came, namely from the people who lived in Amurnu (Syria and Mesopotamia), called the Amorites. As was the case in pre-Mosaic days, and to a large extent in early Israel, when henotheism prevailed, "God" is the foremost deity. We learn from this tradition, and also from its redaction written centuries later, that a long famine preceded the deluge, which is not referred to in the Old Testament, that the famine had been sent because men had multiplied, and also because of their clamor, reminding us of the causes given for the deluge in the Old Testament.

The great importance of this inscription, which was copied about the time of Abraham from an older tablet, together with other facts here presented, is that it will require that the prevailing view be abandoned that the Hebrew traditions were borrowed from Babylonia. This involves many scholarly works written in recent decades upon the early history of Israel. It has been generally held that these stories are of Babylonian origin; that Canaan was a domain of Babylonian culture in the time of Moses; and that Israel had assimilated this foreign culture as well as its religion, "feathers and all." Not only is the Israelitish cult held to be dependent upon the Babylonian, but also many of the chief characters are said to have descended from Babylonian mythology. In Germany where these views developed, some scholars have gone to great extremes; only a change of names had taken place, and Marduk or Bel was transformed into Christ. In America a more moderate position has generally been accepted, in which

the extreme views were toned down, and the Pan-Babylonian theory made more palatable. Nevertheless, it is generally held that these traditions had been brought from Babylonia in the time of Abraham, or in the Amarna Period, or at the time of the exile; and that many of the characters had their origin in myth.

Twelve years ago the writer took issue with this general position, holding that the traditions of the Hebrews were indigenous in the land of the Amorites; and that contrary to the prevailing view, this land was not dependent for its population upon Arabs who migrated from Arabia a little before and after the time of Abraham, but upon an indigenous people, the antiquity of whose culture is as high as that known in Egypt or Babylonia; and also that the Semites who moved into the lower Euphrates valley mainly came from this quarter, and brought with them their culture. He has also consistently maintained that such familiar Biblical characters as the patriarchs and others, instead of being the creations of fiction writers, were historical personages.

While the new point of view was accepted by many scholars, and the tremendous flow of Pan-Babylonian literature was suddenly and very materially reduced in volume, only a few of those who had written upon the subject acknowledged the gains that had been made, and reversed their positions. Even some scholars in their efforts to nullify the advances, instead of facing the real issue in their reviews, dwelt upon and held up as proof of the writer's thesis some extraneous suggestions which had been intended for consideration in filling in the background of the two or more millenniums of Amorite history prior to Abraham.

The writer's thesis in brief is, that the Arabian origin of the Semites living in ancient Syria and Babylonia, including the Hebrews, is baseless; but that the antiquity of the Amorite civilization is very great; and also the assertion that the culture and religion of Israel were borrowed from Babylonia is without any foundation; for they were indigenous; and that the Semites who migrated to Babylonia with their culture were mainly from Amurru. In the judgment of the writer the material presented in this little monograph, as well as in his recently published *Empire of the Amorites*, will require a very extensive readjustment of

many views bearing upon the subject, as well as the abandonment of many others. Moreover, it also has bearings of a far-reaching character on many other Old Testament problems.

Amurru, called "the land of the Amorites," it might be added, is a geographical term which was used in ancient times for the great stretch of territory between Babylonia and the Mediterranean. By reason of its products and its position this land had been attractive to other peoples ever since one strove to obtain what the other possessed, resulting in almost innumerable invasions and conflicts taking place in this land. Within the historical period we know that the Babylonians, Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, and other peoples controlled this territory. It should be added that this country in turn also prevailed at times over other lands, notably Babylonia and Egypt. In these pages we have evidence that one of its rulers conquered Babylonia as early as 4000 B.C.

This country has always represented ethnologically a great mixture. Linguistically, as far as is known, a Semitic language has always prevailed in this great stretch of territory. The Amorite or Hebrew language, being the oldest of which we have knowledge, was followed by the Aramaic, and later by the Arabic which now prevails. To what extent the Akkadian dialect was used in certain parts, and what script was employed in the early period, are as yet undetermined. Excavations at one or two well selected sites will throw light on this and many other questions, and furnish us with the material whereby we will be able to reconstruct many chapters of its early history.

It gives the writer great pleasure to inscribe this little contribution to his colleague and friend, Professor Charles Cutler Torrey, who not only has watched sympathetically these investigations advance, but also in reading the manuscript has made a number of suggestions as well as several identifications of roots which are indicated in the foot notes.

ALBERT T. CLAY.

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