

ATRA-HASIS: A SURVEY

JAMES R. BATTENFIELD
Teaching Fellow in Hebrew
Grace Theological Seminary

New discoveries continue to revive interest in the study of the ancient Near East. The recent collation and publication of the Atra-hasis Epic is a very significant example of the vigor of this field, especially as the ancient Near East is brought into comparison with the Old Testament. The epic is a literary form of Sumero-Babylonian traditions about the creation and early history of man, and the Flood. It is a story that not only bears upon the famous Gilgamesh Epic, but also needs to be compared to the narrative of the Genesis Flood in the Old Testament. The implications inherent in the study of such an epic as Atra-hasis must certainly impinge on scholars' understanding of earth origins and geology.

The advance in research that has been conducted relative to Atra-hasis is graphically apparent when one examines the (ca. 1955) rendering by Speiser¹ in comparison with the present volume by Lambert and Millard.²

Although Atra-hasis deals with both creation and flood, the present writer has set out to give his attention to the flood material only. Literature on mythological genres is voluminous. Therefore the present writer will limit this study to a survey of the source material which underlies Atra-hasis, a discussion of its content and its relation to the Old Testament and the Gilgamesh Epic.

James R. Battenfield earned the B. A. degree at San Diego State College, and the B. D. and Th. M. at Talbot Theological Seminary. He taught for two years at Talbot Theological Seminary and pursued graduate study at U. C. L. A. He is presently taking work toward the Th. D. degree at Grace Theological Seminary.

SOURCE MATERIAL

The source material behind the present edition has been a long time in coming to the fore. The great amount of energies that have been expended on this research will hardly be reflected in this brief study; however, the main lines of endeavor can be traced.

One may surmise that the Atra-hasis epic flourished in Babylonian civilization for some 1,500 years. At the time of Alexander the Great, when Hellenism figuratively and literally buried what was left of Mesopotamian cultural influence in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, Atrahasis was lost. For over two thousand years the only record known to man of a great Flood was the story in Genesis. Berossus, a Babylonian priest about the time of Alexander, wrote a Babylonian history which is also lost. Fragmented traditions of his history have come down to the present through such worthies as Polyhistor and Eusebius.³

The middle of the nineteenth century saw the beginning of serious exploration in Mesopotamia, particularly among British and French interests. Reliefs and monuments were unearthed and taken to Western museums. Thousands of clay tablets awaited decipherment, an interesting process in its own right.⁴ Kuyunjik, the larger mound at Nineveh,⁵ is the site where much Atrahasis material was found, although its identification was not apparent for a long time. In 1842/3 Paul Emile Botta first dug at Kuyunjik, but he did not find any spectacular museum pieces such as were expected in those days. Austen Henry Layard⁶ secured British rights to dig in the area and this caused a conflict with French interests. By 1851 the palace of Sennacherib had been found.⁷ Hormuzd Rassam, a Christian of local extraction, who favored the British, became the leader of native digging efforts. At first he and his helpers dug secretly at night. Having come across the most magnificent reliefs found to date, Rassam continued digging by day. They had dug into the palace of Assyria's last great king, Ashurbanipal.⁸ His library is now well known as one of the great discoveries from antiquity. Practically all of Ashurbanipal's library was taken to the British Museum, thanks to Layard and Rassam.

In London a "layman" in scholarly circles was put to work sorting the fragments of Ashurbanipal's collection. This man was George Smith. At fourteen the humble lad was apprenticed to a firm of bank-note engravers. From an Old Testament background, his first love soon took over in his life as he read with diligence concerning the archaeology of Mesopotamia. He gave up engraving for archaeology before long, and soon was at work collating the thousands of fragments of Ashurbanipal's library. In his own words, Smith mentions with kindness the labors of Botta. Botta found Sargon's palace (which dated from

ca. 722-705 B. C.) at Khorsabad, after his work at Nineveh had proven a failure.⁹ He mentions Layard and Rassam as well, but does not mention Rassam's nocturnal digging.¹⁰ Smith showed that he knew as much about the tablets as anyone and in 1866, at the age of twenty-six, he was made Assistant in the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the museum.

Others knew that works of mythology were preserved, but only George Smith collected and joined enough broken pieces to reconstruct entire episodes, and only he could understand the content. His lack of philological training was made up for by hard work and sheer genius.¹¹

It was on December 3, 1872, nearly one hundred years ago, that Smith read a paper to the Society of Biblical Archaeology concerning his discovery of a Babylonian version of the Biblical Flood story. This paper rocked the world of Biblical scholarship. Four years later Smith published The Chaldean Account of Genesis, and among this selection of Babylonian literary texts was one Smith called "the story of Atarpi."¹² This is now known as the Epic of Atra-hasis.

An amazing feature of the story of the gathering of the fragments that make up Atra-hasis is the unusual length of time required to join the fragments properly. Smith had three broken pieces, enough to gain a plot and to distinguish this from other creation/flood stories. Smith mistook obverse for reverse and his mistake was not corrected properly until 1956. Even more amazing is the fact that, after Smith's untimely death in 1876, the three "Atarpi" fragments became separated and were not joined again until 1899, and the third of the pieces was not published until 1965, and not joined to the other two until 1967. This is the reason that Atra-hasis is spoken of as a "new" flood epic: it is new because its tablet sequence has only recently been finalized.

Other fragments of Atra-hasis naturally experienced independent histories from their discovery to their publication. V. Scheil, a French priest, published a fragment of a flood epic in 1898. His differed from Smith's, and he dated it to the reign of Ammi-saduqa (1646-26 B. C.) of the Old Babylonian dynasty.¹³ The same year a mythological text from the same period was copied by T. G. Pinches. This last text describes the creation of man.¹⁴ In 1899, the German scholar, Heinrich Zimmern wrote an article in which he gave the Umschrift of Smith's two then available fragments, showed Scheil's and Pinches' work was of the same epic,¹⁵ and demonstrated that the name of the hero should be not Atarpi, but Atra, or Atra-hasis. Still at this point the correct order of the fragments was undetermined, and so the matter remained for fifty years.

It remained for the Danish scholar, Jorgen Laessoe, to point out the proper sequence.¹⁶ Lambert and Millard take credit for publishing material done by the same original scribe who wrote Scheil's 1898 fragment. This material had been in the British Museum since 1889.

CONTENT OF THE EPIC

By way of definition, the Epic of Atra-hasis is more a literary tradition than a narrative with precise bounds and limits. Lambert states that plagiarism and a lack of respect for literary rights were common in the ancient world.¹⁷ The only "title" that Atra-hasis had in antiquity is seen repeated in the colophon at the end of each tablet, inuma ilu awilum, "When the gods like man."¹⁸

The principal edition used by Lambert was copied out by Ku-Aya, "the junior scribe." This fact is also discernible in the colophons. Scheil in 1898 had given the name as Ellet-Aya or Mulil-Aya; neither of these is acceptable. It is known that ku + divine name is Sumerian. At one time there was some question about ku in Old Babylonian, but this sign is found in the Code of Hammurapi²⁰ as well as in Ammisaduqa's own famous "Edict."²¹ Ku-Aya's text is not that of a schoolboy, even though he is called "junior scribe." He did his copying ca. 1630 B. C., if one holds to the "middle chronology," the majority opinion, on Babylonian chronology.²² The original must be before 1630 B. C., making Atra-hasis one of the oldest, practically complete texts now known. Ku-Aya's work is an edition in three tablets. Other collated pieces must be relegated to much later periods, to the late Assyrian (ca. 700-650 B. C.) in particular. George Smith's "story of Atarpi," now brought into comparison with the other pieces, must be of the Assyrian Recension, according to Lambert, since it shows marked Assyrian dialectal forms. The distinction between Old Babylonian and Middle Assyrian would show up in the orthography as well. The Assyrian story is essentially the same as Ku-Aya's, but substantially rewritten, Neo-Babylonian fragments differ even more. A Ras Shamra fragment, written in Akkadian, not Ugaritic, has been found, and is included in Lambert. Its first three lines read:

e-nu-ma ilanu^{mes} im-tas-ku mil-ka i-na matati^{mes.ti}
a-bu-ba is-ku-nu i-na ki-ib-ra-ti

The translation is:

"When the gods took counsel in the lands,
And brought about a flood in the regions of the world."

The sixth line reads:

^mat-ra-am-ha-si-sum-me a-na-ku-[ma], "I am Atrahasis."²⁴

As to the theme of the text, the essence of its content, one must categorize it as both a myth because gods play a dominant role, and an epic, because the leading character is a hero. Most basically Atrahasis deals with the problem of organization. A certain dialectic goes on here, viz., there is a conflict which goes through two phases. Both phases feature supernatural forces, but in the first "act" the conflict is among the gods for their own sakes and has to do with divine goals; the second phase concerns the conflict of the gods for the sake of man, i. e., human organization enters the picture.

Tablet I

The story begins with a hearkening back to an earlier time. It almost has a "once upon a time" flavor. Certainly the plot is etiological from the outset.²⁵ "How did man become as he is?" "Once it was like this," the modern storyteller might commence. Once the gods, those superhuman reflections of man's aspirations, worked and suffered as men do now. Quite understandably, since Mesopotamia has always depended upon man-made waterways to redistribute the capricious floodings, the gods are represented as digging the canals. This was at a time when only the gods inhabited the universe. The greater and lesser gods are mentioned in 11. 5-6. The seven great Anunnaki are mentioned. The term is used for all gods at times; at other periods the Anunnaki are the gods of the nether world.²⁶ Three senior gods are mentioned individually. They are Anu, Enlil and Enki. In 1:12 they evidently cast lots to determine their particular spheres of influence. Anu rules henceforth from heaven; Enlil evidently stayed on earth; Enki descended to his abode in the Apsu, a subterranean body of water. The Assyrian recension of the epic from 1:19 ff. probably indicates that Enki set the Igigi (here, junior gods) to work on the canals.²⁷ The Igigi suffered this humiliation for forty years and then rebelled, "backbiting, grumbling in the excavation" (1:39b-40). They agree to take their mutual grievance to Enlil. They want not just reduction of their workload, but complete relief from it. In typically anarchic fashion the junior gods set fire to their digging tools, and utilize them as torches to light their way to Enlil by night. They surround Enlil's temple, called Ekur, in the city of Nippur.²⁸ Enlil's servants, Kalkal and Nusku, bring word to the god²⁹ that he is surrounded. Lines 93 and 95 of this first tablet are a little unclear. Lambert believes some kind of proverbial usage of the word binu/bunu, "son" is employed. If this term were clear, it might be more readily apparent why Enlil does not hesitate to

summon Anu from heaven and Enki from the Apsu to stand with him against the rebels. It must be assumed that the gravity of the situation was reason enough for a coalition of the senior gods to deal with the matter. It is Anu in 1:111 who seems to be the supreme leader. The question is put to the rebels, "Who is the instigator of battle?" (11. 128, 140). The answer comes: "Every single one of us. . ." (1. 146). When Enlil heard that the extent of the antagonism toward him in his realm, earth, was so great, he cried (1:167).

It is curious that Enlil seems to recover his composure so quickly and begins to command³⁰ Anu to go to heaven and bring down one god and have him put to death as a solution to the problem. Perhaps more might be known about the decision to slay a god, if it were not for the fact that right at this juncture (11. 178-89), the text is unclear, and the various recensions must be used to fill the gap. At any rate, when the text resumes, Belet-ili is on hand.³¹ It is she who is summoned to create³² the "Lullu-man."³³ Man now will bear the work burden of the gods. Belet-ili is called Mami in 1:193,³⁴ and then it would seem that she is also called Nintu.³⁵ Though she is the birth-goddess, she disavows any claim to being able to "make things."³⁶ She points to the skill of Enki in that realm. But in 1:203 it becomes apparent that Enki must give her the clay so that she can create man.

Enki will make a purifying bath. One god will be killed; this is one called We-ila (1:223). He is not mentioned but this once in the text.³⁷ His flesh and blood, combined with Enki's clay will result in man. God and clay, therefore, are mixed to make man in the Babylonian conception. Line 215 is instructive: "Let there be a spirit from the god's flesh."³⁸ The plan to make a man is agreed upon by the Anunnaki, the plan is carried out, and the Igigi spit on the clay. Mami then rehearses before the gods in typically redundant, oriental fashion what she has done. The summum bonum of her work is this: the gods are free. Yet, strangely, the work is not complete, because more birth-goddesses, fourteen, are called in on the project and the group proceeds to the bit simti, "the house of destiny"³⁹ (1:249) to get at the work in earnest. So the creation of man is not too clear. Fourteen pieces of clay designated as seven males and seven females, are "nipped off, " and separated by a "brick." (1:256, 259). Another break in the story occurs here. Then there are some rules for midwifery in the Assyrian recension that fills the gap. Ten months is the time necessary before the mortals are born. Finally they are born and the text relates some rules about obstetrics and marriage, but it is not particularly clear until 1:352.

At this point the significant statement is made. "Twelve hundred years had not yet passed."⁴⁰ This sentence begins the second part in

the plot, if one views its story content apart from the tablet divisions. This much time, twelve hundred years, is given as the span of time from man's creation to the Flood. During this period people multiplied and their noise became intolerable to Enlil, who becomes dissatisfied with the noise because he cannot sleep. ". . . Let there be plague," reads the last part of 1:360. Enlil has decided to reduce the noise by reducing the source, man. Namtara, the plague god, is summoned (1:380), but first, the reader is startled by the abrupt introduction of Atra-hasis, the king (1:364). Perhaps he has been mentioned in some lost portion earlier. He must be a king because his personal god was Enki himself. Usually a Babylonian's personal god was a very minor deity. This is seen in much of the wisdom literature and prayers.⁴¹ Enki is one of the chief gods; Atra-hasis must be a king. Atra-hasis petitions Enki to intervene and stop the plague. Enki advises the people to direct their attentions to Namtara, so that he will relax the plague. This is what then ensues as Tablet 1 closes with the statement repeated, "Twelve hundred years had not yet passed."⁴²

Tablet II

The sequence that ended Tablet I is now paralleled. Enlil lost his sleep again, and decides to use drought/famine to eradicate men. Adad the storm god⁴³ should withhold his rain (11:11); waters should not arise: from the abyss. Again Atra-hasis entreated Enki and at length Adad watered the earth, Lambert says, "discreetly. . . without attracting Enlil's attention."⁴⁴

From this point on in the epic the gaps frequently hide the story development. Evidently Enlil slept again but was roused by a third visitation of noise. By now Enlil must realize that some god is thwarting his extermination plans. Enlil resumes the drought. In column 3, 4 Atra-hasis is praying to Enki. By column 4 the famine is still in progress. Enki acts in the behalf of Atra-hasis in column 5. A late Babylonian piece inserted here tells of a cosmic sea that existed in the bottom of the universe.⁴⁶ From this area, fish were caught up in a type of whirlwind, and the second drought perpetrated by Enlil was averted by the sending of these fish among starving mankind. Enlil by now is tired of seeing his plans frustrated. Enki has been his adversary, he surmises. Since water (and fish) was used to save humanity this last time, water will be man's destruction, and Enki is sworn to an oath not to interfere in Enlil's plan. It would seem at this juncture Lullu-awilum, puny man, is doomed.

Tablet III

This last tablet contains the flood story itself. Lambert observes

that "the version known to George Smith from Tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic is in fact largely derived from the account in Atra-hasis."⁴⁷

Fortunately, Ku-Aya's Old Babylonian text is the main source of the third tablet. Atra-hasis is addressing Enki as it begins. It would seem that Enki, as is so typical of polytheistic morality, has already found a way to get around his oath to Enlil. 111:1:18 begins Enki's message for avoiding the flood, and it has a familiar ring: "Wall, listen, to me! Reed wall, observe my words!"⁴⁸ Atra-hasis is told to destroy his house, undoubtedly made of reeds, and build a boat.⁴⁹ Reeds grow particularly in southern Mesopotamia, near the Persian Gulf. Perhaps the story originated in such an environment. Interesting nautical terms are employed in 11. 29-37. Concerning the boat:

Roof it over like the Apsu.
 So that the sun⁵⁰ shall not see inside it
 Let it be roofed over above and below.
 The tackle should be very strong.
 Let the pitch be tough, and so give(the boat) strength.
 It will rain down upon you here
 An abundance of birds, a profusion of fishes.
 He opened the water-clock and filled it;
 He announced to him the coming of the flood⁵¹ for the
 seventh night.

Atra-hasis did as Enki commanded him. The reason for the flood is given "theologically" in the fact that the two gods of the earth and the deep are angry with one another. This sounds primitive indeed. Since Atra-hasis is a devotee of Enki, he must side with him and no longer live in Enlil's earth.

Column 2 of the third tablet is badly broken. It would seem the boat is being built by such as a "carpenter" and a "reed worker."⁵² By line 32 of this column, clean and fat animals are mentioned as being put on the boat. And, then, in the lines remaining of the column, the most personal touch in the poem is given. Atra-hasis must go to live with his own god. He calls for a banquet for his people and his family. Yet he cannot enjoy or even participate in this festivity because he is overcome with grief in contemplating the impending horror. At the banquet he was "in and out: he could not sit, could not crouch" (1.45). His heart was broken instead and he was vomiting.

By now the weather worsened. Adad's thunders being heard in the clouds overhead. Pitch was brought to enable Atra-hasis to close his door. The winds and the waves rose. He cut his restraining hawser and set his reed-boat adrift.

Lines are missing at the beginning of column 3 of tablet III. Restored by conjecture is the mention of the Zu bird in line 7. Zu is mentioned again in one of the recensions.⁵³ and is also found elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern mythology.⁵⁴ The strength of the flood came upon the peoples; its destruction was a nightmare. Enki took it badly from the outset. The birth-goddess Nintu⁵⁵ and the Anunnaki regret the disaster. Nintu bewails the loss of her children, who have become "like" flies.⁵⁶ She seems to have lost her purpose for existence. She rightly blames Enlil for such a lamentable act. Her crying is enunciated in 111:4:5-11. The gods thirsted during the flood, as if they could no more subsist on salt water from the Apsu than could humans. Nintu wanted beer in fact in 111:4:16. The gods stood like sheep standing together in a dry trough waiting for a drink.⁵⁷

Seven days and seven nights the deluge continued. As column 5 is missing its first 29 lines, the flood itself is over at III:5:30. Atra-hasis is "providing food" (line 32), and as the gods smell the food. "they gathered like flies over the offering." This last statement is hardly very flattering to the gods, and most typical of the skepticism of the wisdom genre in Babylonian literature. After the god's repast. Nintu arises and complains concerning the unknown whereabouts of both Anu and Enlil. Since they are the instigators of this terrible calamity. where are they? The question is not immediately answered. Instead an etiological explanation is given on flies, telling of the manufactured flies in the jewelry of lapis worn around the necks of Mesopotamian deities. The reason for this episode is given by Lambert:

Thus the flies in the story are a memorial of the drowned offspring of Belet-ili, and the idea may have been suggested to its originator by a proverb or cliché about dragon-flies drifting down the river.⁵⁹

Enlil, who now has appeared, sees the reed boat and becomes angry at the Igigi. After all, the gods had decided to exterminate man; all the gods were under oath. How did man survive? Enlil wants to know. Anu points out that only Enki, whose realm is the sea, could save man. Enki steps forward and freely admits his deeds and evidently seeks to be exonerated (in a badly damaged passage). Volume 7 is of no help in the flood story; its chief concern is proverbial sayings on childbearing. Column 8 begins at the ninth line: this is the epilogue. The text is so problematic that it is not certain who is speaking in III:8:9-18. Lambert thinks the mother goddess is a leading candidate. In line 15 the whole epic is perhaps called anniam zamara, "this song."⁶⁰ Perhaps the song was recited in some way in Babylonian religious worship.⁶¹ Thus ends the last tablet.

RELATION TO GILGAMESH XI

Still foremost in size and state of preservation among Akkadian epic selections are the twelve tablets (containing over 3,000 lines) of the Epic of Gilgamesh.⁶² The eleventh tablet here deals with the Flood.

Gilgamesh meets the figure who is synonymous with Atra-hasis of the recent epic, Utnapishtim.⁶³ The latter is called "the Faraway"⁶⁴ or "the Distant"⁶⁵ because he dwells removed from others, he is immortal. Gilgamesh had thought in Utnapishtim he would find one prepared for battle,⁶⁶ but he lies indolent upon his back (line 6). Gilgamesh has long sought immortality and he asks the serene Utnapishtim how he attained the blessed state.

Utnapishtim will tell Gilgamesh a secret which begins in Shuruppak,⁶⁷ the city where the gods lived. There the hearts of the gods led them to produce the flood.⁶⁸ The gods present are the same as those in Atra-hasis, among whom are Anu, who is called abasunu, "their father,"⁶⁹ and Enlil, who is denominated maliksunu, "their-counselor."⁷⁰ Ninigiku-Ea is present. This name is another appellative of Enki the god of wisdom who dwells in the Apsu.⁷¹ As in Atra-hasis. Enki/Ea speaks to the house of reeds, Utnapishtim's home:

Reed-hut, reed-hut! Wall, walll
Reed-hut, hearken! Wall, reflect!
Man of Shuruppak, son of Ubar-tutu,
Tear down (this) house, build a ship!⁷²

Thus in both epics the command to build a boat in order to escape the flood is similar. The seed of all living creatures is called to go up into the ship. Dimensions are not given for the ship in Atra-hasis; however, Gilgamesh mentions that the ship should be accurately measured,⁷³ and that the width and length of the boat are to be equal, or square. Finally, the boat should be covered, ceiled over like the Apsu, i.e., impenetrable.

Like Atra-hasis, Utnapishtim pledges to carry out Enki's orders. He must sever his tie with Enlil's terrestrial economy and go to his own god, Enki.

There is a large break in the left margin of the tablet that extends from about line 41 to the center at about 45, and then proceeds to the center of 55 and angles back to reveal the first sign of 53.⁷⁴ A lesser break at the right side extends over lines 48-53.

Children brought pitch for Utnapishtim's boat. The "strong"⁷⁵

or the "grown ones"⁷⁶ brought all else needful. The floor space of the boat is said to be about 3,600 square meters,⁷⁷ or approximately an acre. The walls were 120 cubits high, the decks were 120 cubits on a side. The boat had six decks. Speiser conjectures that the ship took seven days to build from his restoration of line 76.⁷⁸

Utnapishtim's family, the beasts of the field, and all the craftsmen were made to go on board the ship. This is a greater number than Atra-hasis. The rain that is coming is called by Speiser "a rain of blight." It was Enki's water-clock that was set for Atra-hasis. Here it is Shamash,⁷⁹ the sun god, who sets the time of the flood. Adad's thunders signal the approaching deluge. Nergal, god of the underworld,⁸⁰ tears out the posts of the world dam, letting the waters loose. There must be a connection between Atra-hasis 111:3:9-10 and Gilgames XI:I07, where in both cases it is stated that the land was shattered like a pot.⁸¹ This must have reference to a cataclysmic force, something of diastrophism. Countless other examples could be given of this kind of parallelism between the two epics. Cataclysmic language is repeated in Speiser's rendition of line 109, "submerging the mountains."⁸²

The gods cowered during the storm in typically mortal fashion. Ishtar⁸³ seems to take the role of the Mami/Belet-ili/Nintu birth-goddess in Gilgamesh. It is she that laments the sad state of things and blames herself.

On the seventh day the flood ceased. All of mankind had returned to clay. The ship comes to rest on Mt. Nisir.⁸⁴ Utnapishtim sends forth first a dove, then a swallow and lastly a raven, which does not return to the ship. Thereupon he lets out all his "passengers" to the four winds,⁸⁵ and offers a sacrifice. The gods, smelling the aroma as in Atra-hasis, "crowded like flies about the sacrificer."⁸⁶ Ishtar and the jewels are brought into the context here too, with the idea that the jewels are a memorial remembering the flood. Enlil is excluded because he perpetrated the crime.

Utnapishtim is specifically called Atra-hasis, "the exceedingly wise," in line 187. Enlil seems to abate some of his anger and by 11. 193-4, he pronounces a blessing upon the Babylonian Noah and his wife:

"Hitherto Utnapishtim has been but a man;
But now Utnapishtim and his wife shall be like unto us
gods."⁸⁷

Thus the close similarities can be seen between Atra-hasis and Gilgamesh XI. As has been said Atra-hasis is the older of the two, its copy dating from the Old Babylonian with an archetype perhaps as early as ca. 1800 B. C. Both compositions are part myth and part epic. Both show the marks of wisdom literature in their themes of introspection. It must be remembered both heroes are "wise men." Simply because it is longer and better preserved at key points of flood-story interest, Gilgamesh remains the more detailed document on the flood.

RELATION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

In Genesis 6:5-9; 19 the author of the Book of Genesis, Moses, writes concerning God's judgment of the world by a flood. Immediately one is struck by the solemnity of the story: **וַיַּרְא יְהוָה**, "the Lord/Jehovah saw" the wickedness of man. There is no pantheon of gods conniving against one another. There is no "noise" prompting the destruction by the flood. The God of Heaven is hardly dismayed over all, the noise men may make. The problem here in Genesis is not organization or the lack of it, the problem is that "every imagination of the thoughts" of man "was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). Such a world wide problem as moral corruption is so vastly more realistic than noise.

In 6:14 God tells Noah to build a **תֵּבָה**, "an ark."⁸⁸ The ark will be of sturdier construction than mere reeds: it will be of **עֵצֵי גִפְרִית**, "gopher wood." The ark will be covered with **כֹּפֶר**, "pitch."⁸⁹ The dimensions of Noah's ark are superior as well. It is not square but more boatshaped. All three accounts speak of the boat, the pitch and the door. God promises deliverance to Noah in 6:17; Enki indicates that Atra-hasis will "save life," if he escapes as planned.⁹⁰ Only in the Biblical account is the number of animals to be brought into the ark realistic. The tablet is marred in Atra-hasis 111:3:32 ff., but indiscriminate numbers of birds (?), cattle (?) and other wild creatures (?), plus Atra-basis' family, go on board.⁹¹ The "clean beast" of Genesis 7:2 may be reflected in the elluti of III:2:32.⁹²

The duration of the actual rain is more realistic also. Forty days and nights are cataclysmic duration on a world-wide scale. Six or seven days is far less believable. The flood of Genesis lasted 371 days.⁹³ With the words of Genesis 7:11, **נִבְקְעוּ כָּל־מַעְיֵנוֹת** **וְאֶרְבַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם נִפְתְּחוּ** the action and extent of the flood are clear. The niphil verbs here show that these natural

forces were acted upon by an outside Agent, God. One might assume that Enki's Apsu erupted adding to the waters, but the only clear statements have to do with Adad's roaring in the clouds, e. g., in III:2:49, 53 of Atra-hasis.

The closing of the boat's door is treated variously. Genesis 7:16 states simply, **וַיִּסְגֹּר יְהוָה בַּעֲזוֹ**. What obliging soul brought the kupru ("pitch") for Atra-hasis to close his door?⁹⁴ Then that one was swept away in the flood?

Very little is said about the amount and the subsequent assuaging of the waters. Even if this is the case, it is a little difficult to see how one could say of Gilgamesh XI that it portrays a local flood, since the mountains were submerged. That claim is better supported with respect to Atra-hasis, but chiefly from silence, because the latter does not give any real clue as to the extent of the flood.

The destruction of man and beast is deemed complete, however. This would imply a universal catastrophe for both Atra-hasis and Gilgamesh. All flesh died; the waters had to seek out all, in effect. Genesis 7:21-23 is most plain on this point.

Atra-hasis III:5:30 may have a reference to the sending of some kind of bird to find dry land.⁹⁵ Gilgamesh clearly indicates a dove, swallow and raven, while Genesis employs a raven and a dove. Atra-hasis does not give the place of the ark's landing. Mt. Nisir should be identified with Pir Omar Gudrun in Kurdistan, according to Speiser.⁹⁶ Ararat (**אַרְרָט**) has generally been thought to coincide with the mountain of that name in what was ancient Urartu, the region of Lake Van.⁹⁷

The altar that Noah built is "paralleled" in the Babylonian epics, as has been shown. The words **וַיִּבַח יְהוָה אֶת־רֵיחַ הַנְּחִיחִים** "and the Lord smelled the sweet savor" (Gen. 8:21), have their grossly polytheistic analogy in both Atra-hasis and Gilgamesh. Leupold has said that God "viewed the sentiments behind the sacrifice with satisfaction."⁹⁸

If there is a blessing on Atra-hasis at the end of his epic, it is missing. III:7 is about childbirth and seems as if it has no real connection with the rest of the poem. Utnapishtim obtains immortality and goes to live somewhere in the West. Noah receives a promise from God that He will not judge the earth by water again. The Covenant is

given to Noah; there is no Babylonian counterpart to the covenant.

CONCLUSION

After languishing in museum collections for nearly a century, the Epic of Atra-hasis has at last been presented to the scholarly world in a more readable form. The process is as yet incomplete. It is hoped that more fragments may be added to the missing sections of Tablet III. Such a discovery would enhance Flood studies even more. It must be admitted at this point that Gilgamesh XI is still the chief extra-biblical document on the Flood from the standpoint of completeness and parallels. Gilgamesh is a dynamic composition; its story is quite captivating. All of its twelve tablets constitute a marvel of ancient literature, surpassed only by Scripture itself. Atra-hasis, on the other hand, is somewhat colorless by comparison. Lambert has forewarned his readers on this account: "a modern reader must not expect to find our translation immediately appealing or fully intelligible."⁹⁹ The greatest appeal in Atra-hasis must be, in the final analysis, for the philologist. The present author has only given a taste of the rich mine of comparative linguistic material in the epic. As to content, it may be reiterated with previous generations of academicians, all accounts--Atra-hasis, Gilgamesh XI (including the Sumerian flood story of Ziusudra, purposely not touched upon here) and the Genesis Flood--go back to an actual, historical occurrence of a world-wide flood catastrophe. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit has preserved the Biblical account without any mythology, polytheism or low moral concepts, and its very text has been supernaturally preserved as well.

DOCUMENTATION

1. E. A. Speiser, trans., "Atrahasis" (in Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard, ed. 2nd edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 104-6.
2. W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, Atra-hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, pp. 42- 105). Recent periodical discussions by these co-authors include: Lambert, "New Light on the Babylonian Flood," Journal of Semitic Studies, 5/2:113-23, April, 1960; and Millard, "A New Babylonian 'Genesis' Story," Tyndale Bulletin, 18:3-18, 1967.
3. Lambert, Atra-hasis, pp. 134-7.
4. E. g., cf. Samuel Noah Kramer, The Sumerians (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 3-32.
5. Work continues on the smaller mound until very recently, cf. Geoffrey Turner, "Tell Nebi Yunus: The Ekal Masarti of Nineveh," Iraq, 32/1:68 (and especially pl. XV), Spring: 1970.

6. Layard's works are well known. Some of them include: Nineveh and its Remains (new edition; 2 vols. in 1. New York: George P. Putnam, 1852); also A Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh (abridged; New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1852).
7. Layard's remarks on his second expedition are interesting, cf. his Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon (New York: G. P. Putnam and Company, 1853), pp. 67ff.
8. Lambert, Atra-Hasis, p. 2
9. George Smith, Assyrian Discoveries (3rd edition. New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Company, 1876), pp. 2-3.
10. Ibid., p. 4.
11. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 3.
12. Ibid.
13. "Dates are according to the "middle chronology" on Hammurapi, as presented by J. A. Brinkman in A. Leo Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 335-52.
14. Theophilus G. Pinches, The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records and Legends of Assyria and Babylonia (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1902), p. 117. This fragment is from Scheil and has come to be denominated "W" in Lambert, cf. the latter's p. 129.
15. As early as 1902, i.e., at the time of Pinches' first edition of his work quoted immediately above, Pinches is willing to say, p. 117: "It is not improbable that the fragment published by the Rev. V. Scheil O. P., belongs to this legend. . . ." Pinches does not seem as convinced as Lambert implies he was.
16. Lambert, Atra-hasis, pp. 4-5.
17. Ibid., p. 5.
18. Ibid., pp. 32, 42.
19. Ibid., p. 31, n. 1; cf. also Rene Labat, Manuel d'Epigraphie Akkadienne (quatrieme edition; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963), pp. 210-11.
20. The sign is * in Old Babylonian, and is found in phrases such as ina kaspi (KU. BABBAR)-su, "in his silver," cf. E. Bergmann, Codex Hammurabi: Textus Primigenius (editio tertia; Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1953), p. 8 (Law 35, line 3, of the Code).
21. I.8' in the edict reads, in part, ku.babbar^{am}, "and silver," F. R. Kraus, Ein Edikt des Konigs Ammi-saduqa von Babylon, Studia et Documenta ad iura Orientis Antiqui Pertinenta, Vol. V (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), p. 18. Incidentally, Clay has another version of the name of the scribe in the colophon: Azag-

- ^dAya, cf. Albert T. Clay, A Hebrew Deluge Story in Cuneiform and Other Epic Fragments in the Pierpont Morgan Library. Oriental Series, Researches, Vol. V-3. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), p.61.
22. Cf. Brinkman in Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia, p. 337.
 23. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 131.
 24. Ibid., pp. 132-3.
 25. The "etiological motif" was first popularized by Gunkel and is still a topic of current discussion, cf. F. Golka, "Zur Erforschung der Atiologien in Alten Testament," Vetus Testamentum, 20/1:90, January, 1970.
 26. Giorgio Buccellati, "Religions of the Ancient Near East" (unpublished lecture notes, University of California, Los Angeles, California), April 16, 1970.
 27. Lambert, Atra-Hasis, pp. 42-3.
 28. The word E. KUR may be subdivided: E is "temple" and KUR is "mountain," in Sumerian/Akkadian. Thus the Ekur in Nippur was the "mountain temple," Enlil's ziggurat; cf. Buccellati, "Religions." April 28, 1970.
 29. Nusku calls Enlil Beli, "my lord." This name has had a wide distribution in Semitic languages and is seen in the West Semitic לַעֲלֵ, "to marry, rule over;" לַעֲלֵ, "owner, lord," and the many compound names using this epithet, Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, eds., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 127-8 (Hereafter BDB).
 30. The word liqi is an imperative from lequ in 1:171.
 31. The name indicates "Mistress/Lady of the gods." By 1 247 Mami has undergone what Moran terms "a change of status" to be "Mistress of all the gods," William L. Moran, "The Creation of Man in Atra-hasis I 192-248," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 200:48-9, December 1970.
 32. The term libima is from banu, final weak, analogous to the Hebrew בָּנָה "to build."
 33. Lullu is to be taken here as lullu-awilum, "mankind," Lambert, Atra-hasis, pp. 175, 187. -
 34. The usual word for "mother" in Babylonian is ummu, R. Borger, Babylonische-assyrische Lesestücke (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1963), p. LXXXVI.
 35. Nintu is but one of the many names of the mother-goddess. The name means "queen who gives birth," according to Kramer, Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B. C. (revised edition; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 41.

36. I:200, Lambert, Atra-hasis, pp. 56-7.
37. Ibid., p. 153, n. 223
38. The word for "spirit" is etemmu, "ghost," Ibid., p. 177. There is, of course, no analogy to the Holy Spirit.
39. Simtu is a word normally translated "fate" or destiny," Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia, p. 201. These renderings are misleading, though, because the Akkadian word means much more than the connotation in English. "Destinies" can be conceived concretely, they can be written down, hence a "table of destinies." The power of the gods is not inherent in Babylonian thought, but is in a god's power to hold onto the destinies, cf. Buccellati, "Religions," April 21, 1970.
40. The text reads "600.600 mu.hi.a." Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 66. "To acquire a god" was to experience unexpected good fortune. Jacobsen says: "In Sumerian religion the power whose presence was felt in such experiences was given form from the situation and was envisaged as a benevolent father or mother figure concerned with the individual in question and bent on furthering his fortunes," Thorkild Jacobsen, "Formative Tendencies in Sumerian Religion" (in The Bible and the Ancient Near East, G. Ernest Wright, editor. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 270.
42. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 71.
43. Like Baal in his actions, his name appears in many personal names, e. g., ^dSamsi-^dAddu, Samsi Adad, king of Assyria, cf. Georges Dossin, Correspondance de Samsi-ddu. Archives Royales de Mari, I (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1950), p. 34 (ARM 1:7:3).
44. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 10.
45. The frequent breaks in the text have caused Lambert to number Tablet II differently.
46. The Babylonians believed everything floated (?) in a heavenly ocean, Buccellati, "Religions," April 9, 1970.
47. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 11, cf. George Smith, The Chaldean Account of Genesis (4th edition: London: Sampson Low, Marston Searle, and Rivington. 1876).
48. For the relevant lines. cf. Gilgamesh XI:21-2 in E. A. Speiser. trans. "The Epic of Gilgamesh" (in Ancient Near Eastern Texts. James B. Pritchard. ed. 2nd edition, Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1955). p. 93.
49. Again, the words "build a boat." bini eleppa show that in "to build" a boat and "to create" a man, banu/בָּנָה is used synonymously. It is interesting to note that in Genesis 2:22. בָּנָה from בָּנָה, is used in the creation of Eve.

50. Actually ^dSamas, the sun god, is indicated.
51. Abubu is "flood" in Babylonian, from * 'bb, or ebebu, "to purify, clean," Borger, Lesestucke, p. LIII.
52. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 160.
53. Ibid., pp. 125, 167n.
54. Cf. Speiser, "The Myth of Zu" (in Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard, editor. 2nd edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 111 ft.
55. Nintu has feverish lips, a disease, Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 161.
56. The word zubbu is "fly" in Atra-hasis. In the Ugaritic literature il.dbb is used, where it probably means "Lord of the Fly," Cyrus H. Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1965), p. 388. The z-d is phonemically assured. II Kings 1:3 and Matt. 12 :24 are later instances of this phenomenon of the king of demons.
57. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 163.
58. Ibid., Gilgamesh XI:167-9 accuses Enlil alone.
59. Ibid., p. 164.
60. BDB, p. 274. Hebrew equivalents are: זמרה and זמר, "song, melody."
61. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 165.
62. Cf. Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia, p. 255.
63. Cf. Speiser, "Gilgamesh," p. 88, n. 143, and also cf. Thorkild Jacobsen, The Sumerian King List. Assyriological Studies, No. 11 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 76-7, n. 34. Ubar-Thutu the father (?) of Utnapishtim is recorded in the king list, but Ziusudra, Utnapishtim's Sumerian name, is missing.
64. Speiser, "Gilgamesh," pp. 92ff.
65. Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels (2nd edition; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 80.
66. Speiser, "Gilgamesh," p. 93.
67. Cf. Borger, Lesestucke, III, Tafel 60, line 11. It must be due to scribal error that this reading is ^{uru}Su-ri -pak when it should be ^{uru}Su-ru-pak.
68. Ibid., line 14: there is *** , a-bu-bi, "flood."
69. Ibid., II, 94.
70. Ibid., Mlk designates "king" in Hebrew, but the idea inherent is "counselor" in Akkadian. Certainly the two are closely aligned.
71. Henri Frankfort, et al., Before Philosophy (reprinted: Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 267.
72. Speiser, "Gilgamesh," p. 93.
73. Translation by Heidel, Gilgamesh, p. 81, l. 29.
74. Borger, Lesestucke, III, Tafel 61.
75. Heidel, Gilgamesh, p. 82.
76. Speiser, "Gilgamesh," p. 93.

77. Heidel, Gilgamesh, p. 82
78. Speiser, "Gilgamesh." p. 94.
79. It is an easy matter to trace, Utu of the Sumerians through Shamash of the Akkadians to שֶׁמֶשׁ, the word for "sun" in the Old Testament.
80. Speiser, "Gilgamesh," p. 94, n. 205.
81. cf. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 93
82. There is a broken sign (*). This could be restored to *, KUR Sumerian; sadu, Akkadian, "mountain which is what Speiser is supposing.
83. The Sumerian Inanna.
84. Vide infra.
85. Instead of anything analogous to אַרְבַּע רִיחֹת, "four winds," in Hebrew, the text here has the numerical *** (4.IM. MES), 4 sari, "four winds, " Borger, Lesestucke, I, LXXXI; II, 99; III, Tafel 65.
86. Speiser, "Gilgamesh," p. 95.
87. Heidel, Gilgamesh, p. 88.
88. John Skinner, A. Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis (in The International Critical Commentary, S. R. Driver, et al., eds. 2nd edition. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1930), p. 160; and G. J. Spurrell, Notes on the Text of the Book of Genesis (2nd edition, revised; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1896), p. 76, think that this is possibly an Egyptian loanword, perhaps teb(t), "chest, sarcophagus." It is interesting that the Egyptian word for "box" is written * . The first sign, *, stands for a reed shelter in the field, the * is the sign for water, and the last is a determinative for any kind of box or coffin. The resultant word is hn^d. If, however, the word is * in Egyptian, as Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951), p. 1017, say, then Gardiner lists in his grammar *, "floats," under *. the first sign of which indicates "reed floats used in fishing and hunting the hippopotamus," Alan Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar (3rd ed., revised; London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 514, cf. also A. S. Yaduda, The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 1, 15*.
89. BDB, p. 498. The equivalent is given in Atra-hasis, III:1:33,
90. Lambert, Atra-hasis, pp. 88-9.

91. Ibid., pp. 92-3.
92. Ibid., p. 178; the verb elelu, "be pure," has as its noun ellu, "pure."
93. John C. Whitcomb, Jr., and Henry M. Morris, The Genesis Flood (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), p. 3.
94. Lambert, Atra-hasis, pp. 92-3. The words are [k]u-up-ru ba-bi-il. The verb is from abalu, "to carry," The form babil does not look passive, but it is well-attested that from Old Akkadian on by-forms with an initial b are passive, Ignace J. Gelb, et al., The Assyrian Dictionary (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1964), vol. I, pt. I, pp. 10, 28-9. "Pitch was brought" is the correct translation.
95. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 98; the words ana sari, "to the winds, " are all that is left.
96. Speiser, "Gilgamesh," p. 94, n. 212.
97. Cf. the Assyrian Empire map in the unnumbered back pp. of Georges Roux, Ancient Iraq (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1966). The present writer has long wondered what connection is possible between the biblical Mt. Ararat and the "city state of Aratta, probably situated somewhere in the region of the Caspian Sea, "Kramer, The Sumerians, p. 42. Urartu itself had a long history and appears, e. g., in Sargon's eighth campaign in the late eighth century, B. C., cf. Francois Thureau-Dangin, Une Relation de la Huitieme Campagne de Sargon. Textes cuneiformes, Musee du Louvre, III (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1912), 1. 61; p. 12, pl. III.
98. H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), I, 322. The Targum is careful to avoid such anthropomorphisms. Genesis 8:22 reads there: וַיִּקְבַּל יְיָ אֱתָהּ וַיִּרְצֶנָּה, "and the Lord received/accepted with pleasure his sacrifice/gift," cf. Marcus Jastrow, comp., A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York: Pardes Publishing Company, 1950), II, 1309, 1486 and 1411, for the terms. קָבַל the Pael here, is "he received"; רִצְוֶנָּה is "pleasure," and קָרְבָּן, the term referred to in Mark 7: 11, "Corban" (A. S. V.).
99. Lambert, Atra-hasis, p. 6.

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

Grace Theological Seminary
200 Seminary Dr.
Winona Lake, IN 46590
www.grace.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu