

## THE NON-SEMITIC VERSION OF THE CREATION-STORY

TRANSLATED BY THEO. G. PINCHES

IN addition to the versions of the creation-story current in ancient times in Babylonia and Assyria, translations of which have been published in this series<sup>1</sup> by Prof. Sayce, another version has lately come to light. This new text, unlike the others, is written in two languages (Sumerian or Akkadian and Semitic Babylonian), each line of the text being divided to admit of the Semitic translation being inserted between, giving the whole the appearance of an inscription in three columns, the middle one rather irregular and written in smaller characters. The tablet is made of baked clay, and is small and very beautifully written. Translations have been published by me in the *New York Independent*, the *Academy* (29th Nov. 1890, pp. 508, 509), and (complete and accompanied by philological notes) the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1891, pp. 393-408. Prof. F. Hommel has also published a translation in the *Deutsche Rundschau* for July 1891, pp.

<sup>1</sup> *Records of the Past*, New Series, vol. i. pp. 122 and 147.

105-114. The tablet was found by Mr. Hormuzd Rassam at Abu-habbah (Sippara) in 1881-82, and is numbered 82-5-22, 1048. It is a text of great importance in consequence of its being written in two languages.

## THE NON-SEMITIC VERSION OF THE CREATION-STORY

### OBVERSE

1. Incantation: The glorious house, the house of the gods, in a glorious place had not been made,
2. A plant had not been brought forth, a tree had not been created,
3. A brick had not been laid, a beam had not been shaped,
4. A house had not been built, a city had not been constructed,
5. A city had not been made, the foundation had not been made glorious;
6. NIFFER had not been built, Ê-KURA had not been constructed;
7. ERECH had not been built, Ê-ANA<sup>1</sup> had not been constructed;
8. The Abyss had not been made, ERIDU<sup>2</sup> had not been constructed.
9. (As for) the glorious house, the house of the gods, its seat had not been made,
10. The whole of the lands, the sea also.<sup>3</sup>
11. When within the sea there was a stream
12. In that day ERIDU was made, Ê-SAGILA was constructed,
13. Ê-[SAG]ILA which the god LUGAL-DU-AZAGA had founded within the abyss.

<sup>1</sup> The name of the chief temple at Erech (the modern Warka).

<sup>2</sup> [Now Abu-Shahreïn. In the earlier days of its history Eridu was on the shore of the Persian Gulf. The text refers to a sort of heavenly Eridu which corresponded to the earthly one.—ED.]

<sup>3</sup> Or, "The whole of the lands were sea" (*Napkhhar mâtatû tâmtumma*).

14. BABYLON was built, Ê-SAGILA<sup>1</sup> was completed,
15. He made the gods (and) the ANUNNAKI<sup>2</sup> together ;
16. The glorious city, the seat of the joy of their hearts,  
supremely he had proclaimed.
17. MERODACH bound together a foundation before the  
waters ;
18. He made dust, and poured (it) out with the flood.
19. The gods were to be caused to sit in a seat of joy of  
heart.
20. He made mankind.
21. (ARURU had made the seed of mankind with him).
22. He made the beasts of the field and the living creatures  
of the desert ;
23. He made the TIGRIS and EUPHRATES, and set (them)  
in (their) place.
24. Well proclaimed he their name.
25. Grass, the marsh-plant, the reed, and the forest he made.
26. He made the verdure of the plain,
27. The lands, the marsh, the thicket also,
28. Oxen, the young of the steer, the cow and her calf, the  
sheep of the fold,
29. Meadows and forests also.
30. The goat and the gazelle he set therein (?).
31. Lord MERODACH on the sea-shore raised a bank.
32. . . . . at first he made not.
33. . . . . he caused to be.
34. [He caused the plant to be brought forth], he made  
the tree.
35. . . . . he made in (its) place.
36. [He laid the brick], he made the beams,
37. [He constructed the house], he built the city.
38. [He built the city], he made the foundation glorious.
39. [He built the city NIFFER], he built Ê-KURA the  
temple.
40. [He built the city ERECH, he built Ê-A]NA the temple.
41. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> The great temple of Bel-Merodach at Babylon, which bore the same name as "Ê-sagila which Lugal-du-azaga had founded within the Abyss."

<sup>2</sup> [The spirits of the earth.—ED.]

## REVERSE

1. . . . .
  2. . . . .
  3. May thy supreme messenger, PAP-SUKAL, counsel the gods ;
  4. NIN-AKHA-KUDU, daughter of EA,
  5. May she make thee glorious with a glorious remedy ;
  6. May she make thee pure with pure fire.
  7. With the glorious pure fountain of the abyss purify thou the place of thy path !
  8. By the incantation of MERODACH, king of the host of heaven and earth,
  9. May the abundance of the world descend into thy midst !
  10. May thy command be accomplished in time to come !
  11. O Ê-ZIDA, the glorious seat, the beloved of ANU and ISTAR art thou,
  12. Mayest thou shine like heaven ; mayest thou be glorious like the earth, mayest thou shine like the midst of heaven,
  13. May [the evil spirit] dwell outside of thee !
- 
14. Incantation of . . . . .
- 
15. Incantation : The star . . . . . the long chariot of heaven.

The difference between this account of the Creation and that published in vol. i. p. 122, is very marked. It is short even to bareness, telling all it has to say in a few words, whereas the other version extends over several closely-written tablets, and introduces at great length the fight between Merodach and Tiamat, or Bel and the Dragon ; the creation of the heavenly bodies, etc. etc. As Prof. Hommel has pointed out, the principal thing in this new

account of the Creation of the world was not merely the formation of men and animals, but rather the founding of the first seats of civilisation in Babylonia, and, it may be added, the assertion of their divine origin. And in this we may see why the story is put as the introduction to an incantation ; for, judging from the fragment of the reverse, the text seems really to have referred to the dedication-festival or purification of the well-known temple Ê-zida (now the Birs-Nimroud), and the creation-story with which it begins probably led up to the story of the foundation of that renowned temple.

In this new account of the Creation the small number of the deities who took part in the work is noteworthy. The first god mentioned is Lugal-du-azaga, "the king of the glorious abode," who is spoken of as having founded "Eridu within the Abyss," the paradise of the gods. Lugal-du-azaga was probably one of the forms of Êa, the god of the sea and of wisdom. Merodach, the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon, appears as a matter of course, and is spoken of as having created mankind, animals, plants, and the renowned sites wherein Babylonian civilisation had its origin. In the creation of mankind Merodach seems to have been aided by a goddess named Aruru, who was worshipped at Sippara and at Aruru, twin cities of the province of Agadé or Akkad. Aruru is probably the same as Istar, who was worshipped at Sippara, and is possibly identical with a goddess named Gala-Aruru, "the

great one (of) Aruru" or "Great Aruru," who is explained as "Istar the star," in the list of gods numbered K. 2109.

Among the parallels with the Biblical account may be quoted lines 25-29 of the obverse, where the creation of plants, lands, meadows, and forests is spoken of (cf. Gen. i. 11, 12); and lines 22 and 28-30, which describe the creation of living things (cf. Gen. i. 24). "He made mankind" (line 20) corresponds with the words "And God created man" in Gen. i. 26, 27.

On the other hand, there are some remarkable differences. There is no true description of chaos, the making of day and night is not mentioned, nor the setting of the heavenly bodies to give light (this may, however, have been given on a lost portion) and to indicate the seasons. The text is also silent concerning fishes, sea-monsters, and birds; and the days of the creation are also absent, as in the version translated in vol. i. It is nevertheless not impossible that we may have, in the divine Eridu, a reflection of the garden of Eden, though there is no mention of the placing of man therein, nor the tree of life, nor the tree of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The Tigris and the Euphrates

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Hommel has pointed out, however, that the ideograph which denotes Eridu seems to be a *representation of a tree*, and it is worthy of note that the divine Eridu, that within the Abyss, seems to be spoken of as a tree or vine in *W. A. I.* iv. 15, rev., ll. 52, 53, where it says that "Eridu is the dark vine, growing in a glorious place" (such is a literal translation of the Akkadian text; the Assyrian has: "Eridu grew (as) a dark vine, it was made to grow in a glorious place," the translator having taken *e*, a kind of demonstrative suffix, or lengthening, for *ê*, "to grow"). This tree is described as being in the likeness of bright crystal or marble, and planted in the Abyss, and the path of Êa or Aê (god of the sea, rivers,

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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