

## SHORTER COMMUNICATIONS

### GILGAMESH AND GENESIS: THE FLOOD STORY IN CONTEXT

Any paper purporting to deal with the flood accounts of *Gilgamesh* and Genesis must at first sight appear to be digging in already well-furrowed ground. These parallels have been comprehensively listed in Pritchard's ANET<sup>1</sup> and exhaustively analyzed in Heidel's translation<sup>2</sup> and elsewhere. The chart at the end of this article provides a quick summary of this work. It also serves to point out the virtual identity of detail in the two accounts. This, of course, in no way implies a denial of the uniqueness of each. Von Rad sums up the conclusions of recent scholarship on the point of dependence when he states:

A material relationship between both versions exists, of course, but one no longer assumes a direct dependence of the Biblical tradition on the Babylonian. Both versions are independent arrangements of a still older tradition, which itself stemmed perhaps from the Sumerian.<sup>3</sup>

This is precisely the point at which new fascinations begin for the student of comparative culture. For it is the use to which the Deluge is put in each work which reveals ever deeper differences and similarities in the religious approaches of the Hebrews and Babylonians. Having established the material identity of the tale in the two versions, one is impelled to ask why the respective authors use the story where and how they use it. Much work in terms of such "context analysis" has, of course, already been done.<sup>4</sup> It is my purpose here to approach the question merely from a slightly different angle.

Given the fact that two authors (or groups of authors) from entirely different cultures and eras felt able to utilize the same basic tale to communicate deeper meanings to their audiences, what were those points which were felt to be best made in terms of an account of a near-catastrophic flood? As we shall see, there is a great similarity even on this level of dealing with the flood story parallels.

Both the doomed quest of Gilgamesh and the first eleven chapters of

<sup>1</sup> ANET (Princeton, PB, 1958) 66-72, 283-284.

<sup>2</sup> A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Phila., 1956) 120.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Frankfort, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago, 1946); H. Gunkel, *Genesis, übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen, 1922); for recent CBO articles see 15:131-140, 14:323-335, 21:265-282 et alia.

Gn deal with the universal religious themes of divine justice, death, and the relationship between the human and the divine. Both contain an ethical perspective and a demand for divine justice. Our point is that while Gn handles such themes in a fuller and more consistent manner, the far more ancient *Epic of Gilgamesh* likewise deals with them and as such represents no less of a challenge to the fertility-cult mythology of the ancient world.

Gilgamesh's tragic saga represents a rejection of the cyclic view as a "solution" to such mysteries as death, suffering and the caprice of nature. Though it presents no alternative religious resolution as does Gn with its vision of a just Creator who stands above nature and her rhythms, its attack on the capriciousness of the gods is no less devastating. We shall analyze this in terms of various themes which the flood story serves to bring out in both, beginning with a brief survey of the various Mesopotamian flood accounts which can aid us in interpreting its usage in *Gilgamesh* as a whole.

Since the time of Fraser<sup>5</sup> and Gaster,<sup>6</sup> much has been made of the fertility cult with its "non-historic" view of reality, in terms of which the primeval drama of the gods is seen as the cosmic pattern inevitably followed by all natural and human phenomena and events. R. A. F. MacKenzie, for example, contrasts it with the "linear" view of the Hebrews.<sup>7</sup> It is not to the point here to go into a criticism of this theory as an explanation of ancient Near Eastern myth patterns. We shall restrict ourselves to the fact that both *Gilgamesh* and Gn seek to establish a theology of divine justice in the face of the mystery of death and in the context of the concept of a universal flood.<sup>8</sup>

The Babylonian flood epic doubtlessly originated as an independent myth stemming from various environmental and cultural factors. It was later included in *Gilgamesh* for the purpose of emphasizing certain theological and philosophical themes such as divine justice and mortality, much as the Hebrew version was included in the redaction of Gn. The earliest recension of the flood tale excavated to date is the Sumerian account, of which only one-third of one tablet has as yet been found. The first intelligible lines of the Sumerian account deal with the creation and organization of life: man is created first (and significantly in peace), then plants and animals. The lines

<sup>5</sup> Sir James Fraser, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (London, 1966) and *The New Golden Bough* (New York, 1959).

<sup>6</sup> T. H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (New York, 1959).

<sup>7</sup> R. A. F. MacKenzie, *Faith and History in the Old Testament* (U. of Minnesota, 1963).

<sup>8</sup> Neither, of course, totally solves the mystery of death and divine justice, as Job, Qoheleth and Paul would be the first to point out.

dealing with the reasons for the decision to destroy mankind are unfortunately lost. But this cannot be used to deny that there were reasons given. For it can be seen that the placing of the deluge in the context of creation is an obvious attempt to give cosmic dimensions, and thus theological and moral significance, to the action which ensues. That questions of divine justice and mercy are indeed raised is given credence in the dissent of at least a minority faction of the gods from the decision of Anu to destroy man: "At that time Nintu cried out (like a woman in travail);/ Holy Inanna lamented for her people/ Enki took counsel in his own heart."<sup>9</sup>

The man Ziusudra, who like Noah is praised for his piety and devotion, is chosen by one of the dissenting gods to save "the seed of mankind." He is told of the divine decision and commanded to build a giant boat. Again like Noah, strict obedience saves him from the flood. When the storm abates, Ziusudra immediately prays in gratitude and propitiation, offering a holocaust to Anu and Enki (see Gn 8,20). Ziusudra is then blessed and given a portion of divinity, the portion denied Adam, eternal life:

Life like that of a god they give him,  
Breath eternal like that of a god  
they bring down for him.  
Then Ziusudra the king, the preserver of the name  
of vegetation and the seed of mankind,  
in the land of Dilmun, the place where the sun rises,  
they cause to dwell.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting that, in being given the right to kill animals (Gn 9,1-7), Noah is given a privilege which the context implies was formerly the prerogative of God alone. The gift of immortality to man functions centrally in the Babylonian versions. As such, its conspicuous absence in the Hebrew version takes on great significance. For it shows at once that in the Hebrew mind the notion of man as immortal is impossible and also lends support to the theory given here that the right to kill and eat certain animals functions in the Hebrew version as a substitute for the original (or at least earlier) gift of immortality to man as a gift of a portion of divinity itself.

The important statements of the Sumerian account, then, can be seen as a searching for justice on the part of the gods, a theological affirmation that the mercy of some gods will always temper the caprice of others, and the fact that Ziusudra is saved because of his piety and obedience. Hence we have, almost a millennium before Gn, the beginnings of a dissatisfaction with the crudities of polytheism, a conscious search for an explicitly ethical

<sup>9</sup> Heidel, *op. cit.*, 103.

<sup>10</sup> ANET, 30.

theism which would find its most consistent articulation in the Hebrew Scriptures.

It is also interesting to note that Gn 5, whose genealogy provides an introduction to Noah, likewise begins with an abbreviated reminder of the creation and organization of mankind.

In the day that God created,  
in the likeness of God made He him;  
Male and female created He them, and blessed them,  
and called their name Adam,  
in the day when they were created (Gn 5,1-2).

The flood account of the *Gilgamesh Epic* represents the culmination and dramatic climax of the action of the saga, i.e., Gilgamesh's search for immortality. After the death of his friend Enkidu in the prime of life, Gilgamesh begins to understand and therefore to fear death. "Shall I become like my friend?" Seeking an answer to his anguish, he determines to find Utnapishtim, the only mortal according to Babylonian legend ever to gain immortality. The uniqueness of Utnapishtim's triumph is emphasized by another Babylonian tale, the story of Adapa,<sup>11</sup> who had immortality offered to him but succumbed to the deceits of the god Ea, thus losing the opportunity forever.

Gilgamesh, after crossing an impassable mountain range guarded by supernatural hordes and having talked the divine boatman into ferrying him across the sea of death to Utnapishtim's enchanted isle, confronts the immortal mortal with his quest. Utnapishtim attempts to dissuade Gilgamesh from his futile search. In a passage strikingly reminiscent of Eccl, he tells Gilgamesh pointblank that death is inevitable for man:

Do we build a house for ever?  
Do we seal contracts for ever?  
Do brothers divide shares for ever? (Eccl 9,6)  
Does hatred persist for ever in the land?  
Does the river for ever raise up and bring on floods?  
The dragon-fly leaves its shell  
That its face might but glance at the face of the sun.  
Since days of yore there has been no permanence  
(Eccl 1,4; 2,16; 9,5)  
The resting and the dead, how alike they are!  
Do they not compose a picture of death,  
The commoner and the noble,  
Once they are near to their fate? . . .  
But of death, its days are not revealed.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> ANET, 76-79; Amarna Tablet 60-63.

<sup>12</sup> ANET, 65 (Speiser). Compare the original in R. C. Thompson, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (1930).

The subtlety and maturity of the theology of death presented here by Utnapishtim is obvious. Death is not presented simply as the capricious whim of the gods but as a reality intrinsic to both nature and man. The same cosmic rhythm which decrees death for man also prevents evil and hatred from overcoming justice to "persist for ever in the land." Such mingling of hope and irony makes the vision classically tragical rather than pessimistic. As the dragon-fly must die to its shell to see the sun, so too must Oedipus die to pride and nobility in order to gain knowledge. And as with Oedipus, such a gain makes the pain itself meaningful. Here is also found the profound insight into death as the great leveler. Before its face all men, rich or poor, must bow. All men are created equal in the perspective of death.

But Gilgamesh like Job is not satisfied with sophisticated theologizing. He wants life. In his desperation he questions Utnapishtim yet further. Utnapishtim responds with a final effort to convince Gilgamesh of the futility of his quest. He relates the secret of the flood. The point of the flood story, as seen in the light of its context in the epic, is thus to be found in Utnapishtim's question to Gilgamesh at the conclusion of the tale: "But now, who will for thy sake call the gods to Assembly that the life which thou seekest thou mayest find?"<sup>13</sup>

The reason for the gods' decision to destroy mankind is to be found near the end, in the dispute between the gods. The god Ea, defending himself against Enlil's charge that he had allowed one man to escape the destruction Enlil had decreed for all, turns on his accuser.

At this, however, Ea himself broke in and started to upbraid Enlil for his unconscionable brutality. The guilty alone, he declared, and not the whole of mankind, should have been punished, and this could have been done by launching wild beasts or dispatching a plague against them, rather than by wholesale destruction. . . . Enlil was persuaded by these words and, leading me back aboard, along with my wife, he conferred his blessings on us both, telling me that we should henceforth enjoy the status of divine beings. Since, however, such beings have no place in the normal world of men, we were to be transferred to this remote island, far out on the horizon, there to enjoy our bliss forever.<sup>14</sup>

Here we see an impassioned plea for divine justice, highly reminiscent of the many passages in Scripture in which man stands up to God to demand justice of him. "Shall not the author of justice act justly?" (Gn 18,25). Ea here functions as the spokesman for man before the gods, as Moses and the prophets function as spokesmen for Israel before the Lord. Signif-

<sup>13</sup> ANET, 71.

<sup>14</sup> T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York, 1969) 83-84; cf. ANET, 70-71.

icantly, the argument of justice carries the day. Utnapishtim is saved from the wrath of Enlil and even granted immortality. The reason for the deluge in *Gilgamesh* is the sin of man. And the epic seeks to bind the gods to the ethic of justice as tightly as man himself is bound.

Another work, the *Atrahasis Epic*, emphasizes the essential questioning character of its Mesopotamian authors. Though the gods act with caprice, the ideal that one sees emerging from Babylonian material is that of divine justice. No more than Yahweh can the Babylonian pantheon destroy the innocent along with the guilty.

*Atrahasis* is most clearly understood as a meditation on and amplification of the challenge hurled at Enlil by Ea in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. It represents an attempt on the part of Babylonian thinkers to arrive at a more profound concept of the nature of god, a concept which much later the authors of Gn were able to presume. Like Gn 6,1 *Atrahasis* begins the story of the flood with a picture of man multiplying, filling the earth and thus disrupting even the heavens. In Gn this disruption is first manifested in the scene in which the daughters of men arouse the lust of those closest to God, the "sons of God," who appear to be a monolatrous equivalent of a pantheon of deities. In response God reiterates the statement that man is, by creation, mortal. Mortality is so basic that it will overcome even the semi-divine status of the offspring of a union of the Sons of God and human women. He allots a limited period of time for the offspring, for to the extent that they are human, they also are mortal. "My spirit (*rûhî*) shall not abide in man (*'âdâm*) forever, for that he is also flesh; therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years (Gn 6,3).<sup>15</sup>

Because of the importance of the conception of death in both *Gilgamesh* and Gn, we shall digress for a moment to look more closely at the Hebrew notion. It will here be postulated that death for the Hebrews, far from being a punishment visited upon a preternaturally immortal man, is actually an integral part of man's nature. Indeed, death is a distinguishing feature between the very notions of divinity and humanity.

Careful reading of the paradise account, for example, reveals that death is not given by God as one of the curses, but is rather brought in as validation for the curse of enmity between man and the soil:

Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat of

<sup>15</sup> Though this interpretation of Gn 6,3 is not the traditional one, it strains the Hebrew less and fits the context better than does the "period of grace" interpretation, which in effect denies the justice of God by viewing Him as condemning man for the sins of the sons of God.

the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust and to dust you shall return (Gn 3,17b-19).

And in Gn 8,21 God states, "I shall never again curse the ground because of man."

Hence in Gn 6,3 God limits man's length of days, despite the fact that He has shared his *rûah* with man, precisely because man is "also flesh" and thus is destined by his nature to death. "My *rûah* shall not abide (*yadôn*) in man forever." The Hebrew *yadôn* commonly means "judge." It is associated with the Arabic *dāna*, "persist" (as in LXX). Speiser also points out a possible affinity to the Akkadian *dinānu*, "surrogate" or "substitute," and thus translates the passage "My spirit shall not shield man" in the *Anchor Bible*. Based on this material Gaster<sup>16</sup> translates it, "My spirit is not going to be duplicated in man." Whatever the etymology, the effect is to emphasize the Hebrew notion that death, integral to the essence of man, is one of the prime categories distinguishing man from God.

Death at least in part defines what it means to be man. For the Hebrews the name given a person or substance at once isolates and defines the nature of the one named. Hence God constantly names or changes the names of those whom he calls to His service. Abram, for example, becomes Abraham, father of the people, for that is the promise given to and the divinely appointed function of this man. In naming man "earth" or "dust," the Scriptural authors reveal much about the Hebrew concept of the nature of humanity as such. To return to the earth, to die, is the destiny of man from the very act of creation.

Gaster<sup>17</sup> thus mentions two possibilities in the interpretation of the Paradise account. The ambiguity is, of course, caused by the fact that the final redaction as we have it is a composite of at least two earlier versions which, following Gaster, we will call J<sup>1</sup> and J<sup>2</sup>. J<sup>1</sup>, for example, knows of only one tree. Though other divisions beyond that given by Gaster are possible, a multiplicity of sources in the J account is clear. One possibility, then, is that the forbidden tree was originally a tree of death, not knowledge, and the choice was between a tree of death and a tree of life, which would interpret the story closer to the *Adapa* model referred to above. The second possibility is that the fruit of the trees is taboo because it can convey to mortals the two basic characteristics of divinity, incorruptibility and divine knowledge.

Whichever postulate one opts for, it is clear that "man is not said to have

<sup>16</sup> Gaster, *op. cit.*, 351.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

been created immortal and to have lost his immortality through disobedience."<sup>18</sup> Rather the message of the account, even in its final version, must be seen on the level of the tragic irony of human existence. In Gn "the time-honored myth . . . of the expulsion of the first man from Paradise for eating the fruit of knowledge is retold to illustrate man's constant sacrifice of innocence to knowledge."<sup>19</sup> This understanding is supported by the Tower of Babel story as well as the above-mentioned account of the con-sorting of human women with divine beings (Gn 6,1-4). What possible motivation, one may ask, could God have for barring the primal couple from the tree of life (Gn 3,22), if they already possessed eternal life?

In both Gn and *Gilgamesh*, only the fruit of one, unique tree will give eternal life outside direct, divine intervention. In both it is the serpent, symbol of fertility and in its ability to shed its skin also symbol of eternal life, that is contrasted to man, the mortal being. "It came up from the water and snatched the plant (of life), sloughing its skin on its return. Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept" (Tablet XI, 11,287-9). It is interesting that while in *Gilgamesh* it is the serpent who snatches the eternal fruit from man, in Gn it is God who bars man from the fruit of life.

Mankind, then, through the seductive power of its women has disturbed the peace of the heavenly host. But what disturbs God most in Gn is the turbulence and violence of man, which has corrupted all flesh and the land itself (Gn 6,11-13).

The land become great, the people multiplied;

The land became sated like cattle.

The god (Enlil) became disturbed by their gatherings . . .

"Great has become the noise of mankind;

With their tumult they make sleep impossible."<sup>20</sup>

The essentially moral character of this tumult in *Atrahasis* is made increasingly clear in the ensuing action of the epic. Time and again Enlil reprimands mankind through restrained punishment. Heeding the Babylonian demand for divine justice, he does not seek to destroy man wholly, but to teach him a lesson. But, much like the Israel viewed by the prophets at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, mankind fails to heed the repeated warnings, which include famine, pestilence and finally a flood that in most details parallels both the Sumerian and the Hebrew versions. Here we have a theology of suffering roughly equivalent to that of Scripture, in which

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv.

<sup>20</sup> Heidel, *op. cit.*, 107. Compare *ANET*, 43-44 (Sumerian); 93 ff. (Akkadian); 104 ff.

suffering becomes not merely punishment for sin but an attempt by God to lead man to a more ethical way of life.

Samuel Noah Kramer interprets "the clamor of mankind" of the *Atrahasis Epic* as "man's chronic depravity and evil-doing."<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, there is no extant conclusion to the tale. But it must be noted that both the justice and the mercy of Enlil are emphasized by the repeated falling into evil of man and the continued restraint on the part of the divinity.

Another Akkadian tale deserves mention in this context. Here, the protagonists are Irra, god of pestilence who takes delight in slaughtering men, and his companion Ishum, Promethean god of fire who counsels against the destruction of man. Irra states that he is enraged at mankind, "because man feared not my utterance and heeded not the word of Marduk, but acted according to his own heart."<sup>22</sup>

The parallels between Irra's pronouncement and the saying of the prophets concerning the reasons for the fall of Jerusalem are obvious. Finally, confronted by Ishum with the injustice of killing both "the righteous and the unrighteous, . . . him who has sinned and him who has sinned not,"<sup>23</sup> Irra relents and promises to send peace and prosperity to man. Again, a sense of morality so strong that even the gods must be bound to it pervades the text.

Another moral point scored by Utnapishtim lies in the comic scene that is enacted immediately after the conclusion of the flood story. The position of this scene emphasizes its relevance for the interpretation of the story as a whole. Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh to refrain from sleep for six days and nights, for sleep is akin to death. Staying awake will then be a measure of Gilgamesh's worthiness for immortality. Travel-weary Gilgamesh immediately, of course, falls asleep.

Utnapishtim cautions his wife to mark on the wall the number of days that Gilgamesh sleeps. He tells her to bake a loaf of bread so that the amount of mold and dryness in the bread will prove the length of Gilgamesh's sleep for "deceitful is mankind, he will try to deceive you."<sup>24</sup> True to form, Gilgamesh on waking immediately attempts to lie his way into eternity. The fact that he has been asleep for days hardly deters him from saying, "Hardly did sleep spread over me, when quickly you did touch me and rouse me."<sup>25</sup> Man, too weak even to overcome sleep, is by nature incapable of immortality. Further, his deceitfulness makes him unworthy of the honor. Only the pious like Utnapishtim can expect the favor of the

<sup>21</sup> S. N. Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World* (New York, 1961) 127.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Gn 18,23-25.

<sup>24</sup> Heidel, *op. cit.*, 89.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

gods. Courage, strength, prowess, wealth, none of these are sufficient to enable man to "become like the gods." Though man may share oneness of life with the gods by reason of being created from the divine blood of the slain rebel-god (*Enuma Elish*), his portion of that life is severely limited.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, of course, man is by creation and creative function a likeness of the one Creator. But even here God carefully guards his own portion, immortality. In the J creation account we read:

And the Lord God said: "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

*Therefore* the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken (Gn 3,22-23; italics mine).

Noah, let us recall, was above all a tiller of the soil (Gn 9,20). Hence, for this and the reasons alluded to above, the flood story of Gn can be understood only in the context of the twin creation accounts which introduce it. In the blessing of Noah (Gn 9,1-7), the image and likeness theme lying at the heart of the biblical theology of creation, is again central. The Flood has mingled the waters above with those below, reducing the earth to the pre-creation state of chaos. Hence a new creation and a new mandate to increase and multiply are needed and given by God. The seasonal cycles are re-constituted and God promises, despite the fact that evil and violence will continue in man's heart, that they shall "cease no more" (Gn 10,22). Such a promise, of course, has a fertility cycle background, but denies the basic dynamics of the fertility cult by making it clear that man's actions, for good or ill, can have no effect on the pattern of the seasons.

Just as the Hebrew religion as a whole represents a revolt against the fertility mythology of the ancient Near East, so does the *Epic of Gilgamesh* represent an impassioned, if less consistent, revolt against certain superficialities of ancient thought. The revolt against the fertility cult. in the form of the revolt against the cult's approach to death and in its conception of divine justice, is thus almost as much a part of Babylonian thought as is the fertility cult itself.

In the characters of Gilgamesh and the "Babylonian Job" are to be found the seeds of rebellion against the accepted world view of the ancient peoples. It is such a religious revolution which came to fruit in the unity and beauty of the Hebrew vision.<sup>26</sup>

Thorkild Jacobsen characterizes the *Epic of Gilgamesh* as part of a surging quest on the part of the Babylonians for a more meaningful approach to justice and suffering, the same mysteries which take up so

<sup>26</sup> Cf. E. Fisher, *The Tragic Vision in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (U. of Detroit, 1968).

many of the pages of the Bible.<sup>27</sup> The epic epitomizes this Babylonian "revolt against death."

We meet it as a smoldering resentment and a deep-seated feeling of wrong; it is more a feeling than a thought. Yet it can hardly be doubted that this feeling has its basis in the new concept of human rights, in the claim for justice in the universe. Death is an evil—it is as harsh as any punishment, is, indeed, the *supreme* punishment. Why must man suffer death if he has committed no wrong? In the old, arbitrary world this question had no sting, for both good and evil were arbitrary matters. In the new world of justice as a right it became terribly urgent. We find it treated in the Epic of Gilgamesh.<sup>28</sup>

That *Gilgamesh* refuses to come to a happy and superficially harmonious conclusion is a mark of its vigorous honesty. It is not meant to comfort the faithful but to challenge them. It is an example of religious literature at its best, where religion becomes no longer an opiate for dull people but an articulation of man's deepest awareness of his struggle to become human.

The true profundity of the Hebrew conception of the ethically-bound God who stands above nature rather than in it can thus be seen, not by denigrating the tragic quest of Gilgamesh, but only by accepting the deep perception of the Babylonian vision. For it is in this context alone that the Hebrew genius can be seen as a culmination of much of man's earliest and greatest probings into the nature of reality.

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## CHART

### FLOOD STORY PARALLELS

#### HEBREW SCRIPTURES

1. CONTEXT: Gn places the flood following a recapitulation of the creation account (Gn 5,1-2).
2. REASON FOR FLOOD: Man's violence has corrupted the whole earth (Gn 6,5-8; 11-13).
3. Noah characterized as blameless and righteous, finding favor with God (Gn 6,8-9).
4. God speaks to Noah directly.

#### MESOPOTAMIAN VERSIONS

1. Both the Sumerian and Atrahasis versions begin with a brief creation account.
2. a) Gilgamesh: man's "sin" (Tablet XI, 179-85). b) Atrahasis: clamor from masses of men disturbs the peace of the gods.
3. Utnapishtim characterized as pious and devoted to Ea, which is why Ea saves him.
4. Ea must resort to subterfuge to bypass the decision of the Assembly of the gods.

<sup>27</sup> Innocent suffering remains an enigma, as the works of Dostoevsky, Sartre, Camus, and Kafka testify.

<sup>28</sup> Frankfort, *op. cit.*, 208.

5. Noah is obedient immediately and without question.
6. Detailed construction plans given by God.
7. No warning of impending doom given to mankind as a whole.
8. Noah given no orders on what to say to the curious.
9. "Of every species that *shall come to thee*" (Gn 6,20).
10. P-story. The mixing of the waters from above and below indicates that the Flood is meant as a return to the state of primeval chaos.
11. Only eight of Noah's immediate family are saved to repopulate the earth.
12. Flood lasts one year, eleven days.
13. Universal Destruction, even the mountains are covered (7,19-20).
14. God is totally above the storm.
15. The opening of the window of the Ark (Gn 8,6).
16. Bird Scene (Gn 8,7-12): Raven and dove (twice) sent to determine the safety of descent from the ark (3 attempts).
17. The first act on leaving the ark is to offer sacrifice for propitiation and gratitude (8,20).
18. "The Lord smelled the soothing odor" (8,21).
19. The covenant God makes with man ensures the stability of nature (Gn 8,22).
20. Rainbow as a sign of the covenant and a reminder to God (9,12-15).
21. New Creation motif. Compare Gn 8,16-19 and 9,1 with Gn 1.
22. Blessing of Noah: (Gn 9,1-7) God gives him fruitfulness and a privilege formerly withheld, the right to kill and devour animals (cf. Gn 1,28-30, which designates plants alone as food for man).
23. Moral conclusion in the prohibition against blood and the taking of human life. Noah, and God, stay in history.
24. Revolt against the traditional fertility-cult mythology, stressing God's justice.
5. Utnapishtim is obedient in following commands explicitly.
6. Detailed construction plans given by Ea.
7. No warning given, though Ea argues that Enlil *should* have given one (Tablet XI, 177-185).
8. Utnapishtim told to resort to a subterfuge to keep the secret.
9. In Atrahasis, the animals also come by divine guidance.
10. The Flood "turned to blackness all that had been light." Various creation accounts indicate that this is likewise a return to primeval chaos.
11. All of Utnapishtim's family and kin, craftsmen and even a pilot are saved. These, not Utnapishtim, repopulate the earth.
12. Flood lasts 7 days and 7 nights (same time as Creation in Genesis).
13. Universal Destruction, even the mountains (homes of the gods) are covered.
14. The gods cower from the fury of the storm (XI, 113-5).
15. Atrahasis: window is opened to see the light (i.e. return from primeval state of darkness).
16. Bird Scene (XI, 145-54): Dove, swallow, raven sent out (3 attempts).
17. First act is to offer sacrifice for propitiation and gratitude (XI, 155).
18. "The gods smelled the sweet savor/ The gods gathered like flies over the sacrificer" (XI, 160-1).
19. The dispute between the gods is precisely over this point of justice and stability.
20. Ishtar states: "As surely as this lapis around my neck I shall not forget" (XI, 164-5).
21. New Creation motif, cf. no. 15 above. (Not as strong in Gilgamesh.)
22. Blessing of Utnapishtim: (XI, 193-4) Enlil gives him a share of divinity by making him immortal.
23. "Otherworldly" conclusion. Utnapishtim is taken to a sacred land. Man is left on his own by the gods.
24. Revolt against the traditional fertility-cult mythology, *seeking* divine justice.