

CHAPTER VIII

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN OR A CITY AND THE BEGINNING OF AGRICULTURE FROM A TABLET WRITTEN AT NIPPUR BEFORE 2000 B.C.

TRANSLATION. COMPARISON WITH BIBLICAL MATERIAL.

This tablet begins with a description of a place the name of which is not with certainty identified. Possibly it was Eridu, but probably Dilmun.

1. Translation.

Column I

1. Holy is [the place] where you are;
2. The mountain Dilmun is holy.
3. Holy is the place where you are:
4.the mountain Dilmun is holy.
5. The mountain Dilmun is holy, the mountain Dilmun is pure,
6. The mountain Dilmun is brilliant.
7. Alone in Dilmun they lay down.
8. Where Enki and his consort lay.
9. That place is pure; that place is brilliant.
10. Alone in Dilmun they [lay];
11. Where Enki and Ninella lay,
12. That place is pure, that place is brilliant.
13. In Dilmun the raven cried not,
14. The dar-bird its dar-cry uttered not.
15. The deadly lion destroyed not,
16. The wolf a lamb seized not,
17. The dog the weak kid tore not,
18. The dun-animal the food-grain destroyed not,
19. She planned not for young offspring....
20. The birds of heaven their offspring hatched not,
21. Doves laid not eggs (?)
22. Of eye-disease, "it is eye-disease," one said not;
23. Of headache, "it is headache," one said not.
24. To a mother, "mother," one said not.
25. To a father, "father," one said not.
26. In the holy place a libation was poured not; in the city one drank not;
27. The river-man "cross it?" said not;

Langdon, *The Sumerian Epic of Paradise, the Flood, and the Fall of Man*, Philadelphia, 1915

34. The fields received the waters of Enki.
35. It was the first day whose month is first;
36. It was the ninth day whose month is first;
37. Like fat, like fat, like abundant sweet oil.
38. Ninkurra like fat had brought them forth
39. The goddess Takku to receive his outpouring....
40. Ninkurra to Takku [concerning the outpouring] spoke:
41. "I will irrigate thee with my irrigation.....
42. With favorable words will I speak.....
43. The one alone that will restrain it.....
44. Enki for me shall.....

The rest of the column, consisting of two or three lines, is missing.
 The repetition in this column is characteristic of early poetry. Primitive peoples are fond of iteration, and in the description of the way the waters came it was to them very effective.

Column IV (about twelve lines are broken from the tablet at the beginning)

13. [To Takku to receive outpouring]
14.
15.
- 16.....in the garden.....
17.
18. Thetree (?) let him plant,
19. The.....tree (?) let him plant,
20. At the explanation of the great outpouring let my begotten stand (?).
21. Let the two gu-ba be filled with water,
22. Abundant water let him pour out,
23. Reservoir water let him pour out,
24. The barren land let him irrigate,
25. As gardener.....let him go forth (?)
26. On the bank, along the bank, let.....
27. Who art thou? The gardener.....
28. For Enki, the gardener.....

(Six lines are here broken away.)

35. Thetree (?) he planted,
36. Thetree (?) he planted; at its base he rested.
37. Enki turned his eyes to him; his scepter he lifted up;
38. Enki to Takku took his way.
39. At the tree he said: "A holy revelation, a holy revelation!"
40. "Who is it that thou art?"
41. "I am a gardener; joyful.....
42. For a price I will give thee."
43. Takku with joyful heart at the tree(?) the revelation beheld,
44. Enki to Takku explained his outpouring.
45. The promised fruit was given to him,
46. At thetree (?) it was given to him,
47. At thetree (?) it was given to him,
48. Takku received the outpouring; with the left hand he grasped it; with the right he seized it.

From the parts of column IV which are still legible, it appears that the messenger was revealing to Takku the secrets of agriculture. This corresponds to the statement in Genesis 9:20, that “Noah began to be a husbandman.”

At the beginning of Column V some seven lines have crumbled away, and the beginnings of eight more have also become illegible.

Column V

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7. [The wood-plant grew,]
 8. [The salt-plant] grew,
 9. [The.....plant] grew,
 10. [The a-pa-shar-plant] grew,
 11. [The tu-tu plant] grew,
 12. [The.....plant]grew,
 13. [The.....plant] grew,
 14. [The cassia] plant grew,
 15. “O Enki, for me they are brought forth, they are brought forth.”
 16. To his messenger, Usmu, he spoke, he said:
 17. “The plants—their fate forever [I have determined.]”
 18. What is this? What is this?’
 19. His messenger, Usmu, returned:
 20.
 21. “My king has commanded the wood-plant,
 22. That it may be cut off and eaten,
 23. My king has commanded the salt-plant,
 24. That it may be cut off and eaten.
 25. My king has commanded theplant,
 26. That it may be cut off [and eaten].
 27. My king has commanded the a-pa shar plant,
 28. That it may be cut off and eaten.
 29. [My king] has commanded the tu-tu plant,
 30. [That it may be cut off] and eaten.
 31. [My king as commanded theplant,]
 32. [That it may be cut off and eaten,]
 33. [My king has commanded theplant,]
 34. That it may be cut off and eaten.
 35. [My king] has commanded the cassia plant,
 36. That it may be cut off and eaten.”
 37. By Ninkhursah in the name of Enki a curse was uttered:
 38. “The face of life, when he dies, he shall never see [again].”
 39. The spirits of the earth in the dust sat down.
 40. The spirits of the earth in the dust sat down.
 41. “I, Ninkhursag, brought forth for thee people; what is my reward?”
 42. Enlil, the begetter, answered the rebellious one:
 43. “Thou, Ninkhursag, hast brought forth people;
 44. In my city I will make two thrones (?) and they name shall be called on there.

45. As a dignitary her head alone is exalted;
46. Her heart alone is changed;
47. Her eye alone is endowed with light.”

42. “Grandly are they brought forth, they are created.
43. Let Absham be lord of vegetation,
44. Let Nintulla be lord of Magan,
45. Let Ninkautu choose Ninazu as a spouse,
46. May Ninkasi be the full heart’s possession,
47. May Nazi become mistress of weaving (?)
48. May Dazima the house of strong life take,
49. May Nintil became mistress of the mouth.
50. May Enshagme become lord of X.
51. Glory!”

2. Comparison with the Bible.---Here the tablet concludes. This last column, which tells how the goddess Ninkhursag came to favor Takku and to create a number of divine helpers for her, has not parallel in the Biblical account. As Takku received the especial protection of Ninkhursag who created her for all these divine helpers, it seems certain that this tablet had not reference to the fall of man, as Langdon supposed. It appears rather to be a mythical account of the beginnings of agriculture and the medicinal use of the plants in Babylonia, Agriculture implies irrigation. “From the first day whose month is first” to the ninth month is the period when Babylonia is watered. The Tigris begins to rise in March, the first month, the overflow of the Euphrates does not subside till the sixth month, and the winter rains are at their height in the ninth month.

As Adam was driven from Eden to eat of the fruits of the earth (Gen. 3:18, 24; compare Gen. 1:29), and Noah became a husbandman (Gen. 9:20), the story of Takku presents a remote similarity to both of them. Langdon compares the list of divine beings with which the tablet ends with the antediluvian patriarchs of Genesis 4 and 5, and suggests the possibility that here we have the original names of those patriarchs. Beyond the fact that Absham somewhat resembles the name Abel and was, like Abel, an agriculturalist, there is no apparent connection. The names in no way correspond. It is more probably that we have the names of those patriarchs in the list of kings translated in Chapter V.