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There Were Jaredites, Part II: The Babylonian Background (cont.)

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Abstract: This wide-ranging series discusses the “epic milieu” of the second millennium B.C. and places the Jaredites in their historical context alongside the Babylonians, Egyptians, early Greeks and others. It makes a comparison between the Book of Ether and ancient writings of Babylon, Egypt, Sumer, and others. The description of the Jaredite boats seem to resemble the boat of Ut-Napitshtim who was the Sumerian counter-part of Noah. Old Jewish and even older Indian sources record the use of shining stones that protect the owner beneath the water. These have been traced back to Babylonian tales of the deluge. Since the Jaredite record reports that their boats were patterned after Noah’s ark, ancient myths that surely have their foundation in real events help to provide greater understanding of the book of Ether. The book of Ether meets all the criteria of epic traditions of heroic societies. The remains of heroic societies are difficult to identify. The second part continues the analysis of the "Babylonian background."

WITH YOUR permission I would like to place side by side before you two descriptions of a remarkable type of boat; the one is from the book of Ether, the other from Professor Hilprecht's study of the 'ark' as depicted in three versions of the Babylonian flood story, to which we add a fourth text (No. xvi in Gadd's *Reader*). First let me present a list of some dozen peculiar features of a Jaredite ship in the words and roughly in the order in which they are given in the second and sixth chapters of Ether:

"First, they were built 'after the manner of barges which ye have hitherto built.' (Ether 2:16.) That is, except in some particulars these boats were not a new design but followed an established and familiar pattern—these really were such boats.

"Second, they were built 'according to the instructions of the Lord.' (2:16.)

"Third, '... they were exceeding tight, even that they would hold water like unto a dish; and the bottom thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish; ...' (2:17.)

"Fourth, '... and the ends thereof were peaked. ...' (2:17.)

"Fifth, '... and the top thereof was tight like unto a dish. ...' (2:17.)

"Sixth, '... and the length thereof was the length of a tree.' (2:17) 'And they were small, and they were light upon the water, even like unto the lightness of a fowl upon the water.' (2:16.) It is quite plain from this emphasis that the usual type of vessel in those days was some sort of raft, designed simply to float, not to keep out water.

"Seventh, '... and the door thereof, when it was shut, was tight like unto a dish.' (2:17.)

"Eighth, 'And the Lord said ... thou shalt make a hole in the top, and also in the bottom; and when thou shalt suffer for air thou shalt unstop the hole and receive air. And if ... the water come in ... ye shall stop the hole, that ye may not perish in the flood.' (2:20.)

"Ninth, '... ye shall be as a whale in the midst of the sea; for the mountain waves shall dash upon you. ...' (2:24.)

"Tenth, '... the Lord caused stones to shine in the darkness, to give light unto men, women, and children, that they might not cross the great waters in the darkness.' (6:3.)

"Eleventh, '... their flocks and herds, and whatsoever beast or animal or fowl that they should carry with them ... got aboard of their vessels or barges, ...' (6:4.)

"Twelfth, '... the Lord caused that there should be a furious wind ...' (6:5.) '... they were tossed upon the waves of the sea before the wind.' (6:5). '... the wind did never cease to blow ... and

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thus they were driven before the wind.' (6:8.)

"Thirteenth, '... they were many times buried in the depths of the sea, ...' (6:6.) '... when they were buried in the deep there was no water that could hurt them, their vessels being tight like unto a dish, and also they were tight like unto the ark of Noah ...' (6:7.) '... and no monster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them. ...' (6:10.) (See Ether 2 and 6.)

"Now with all this in mind, let us go through our thirteen points again, in the same order, but this time with reference to the Babylonian descriptions of the *magur* boat that Ut-Napishtim built to survive the flood. Throughout we shall confine ourselves to quoting Hilprecht verbatim, lest we be suspected of stretching a point here and there. Each feature in the following list corresponds to something designated by the same number in the Ether list.²⁹

"One, 'This class of boats (we are quoting Hilprecht), according to the Nippur version (the oldest), (were) in use before the Deluge.' In historic times the archaic craft was preserved only in ritual, the gods 'in their boats ... visiting each other in their temples during certain festivals ... the Babylonian canals, serving as means of communication for the *magur* boats of the gods between their various temples at certain festival days ... Billerbeck and Delitzsch show that a certain class of boats really had such a shape.'

"Two, 'In all three versions of the Deluge Story Utnapishtim receives special instructions concerning the construction of the roof or deck of the boat.' The manner in which he received the revelation is interesting: the will of father Anu, the Lord of Heaven, was transmitted to the hero through a screen or partition made of matting, a *kik-kisu*, such as was ritually used in temples. In the Sumerian version given by Gadd the command is: 'By the wall at my side stand ... By the wall a word will I speak to thee ... My pure one, my wise one, by our hand a deluge (shall be caused),' etc.

"Three, there was 'of course a solid part, strong enough to carry a heavy freight and to resist the force of the waves and the storm.'

"Four, 'Jensen explains MA-TU as a "deluge boat," ... adding, that when seen from the side it probably resembled the crescent moon ... Moreover, the representations of the sea-going vessels of the Tyrians and the Sidonians ... show that

a certain class of boats really had such a shape.'

"Five, '... the principal distinguishing feature of a *magur* boat (was) ... the roof or deck of the boat ... We notice that in the Biblical as in the Babylonian version great stress is laid on the preparation of a proper "roof" or "cover" ... "Cover it with strong deck," (Nippur Version, li. 9.) "... with a deck as strong as the earth" or "let its deck be strong like the vault of heaven above."' (Second Nineveh Version, lis. 2f.)

"Six, the lines containing 'a brief statement concerning the measures of the ark' have been effaced in the Nippur version. The First Nineveh text says simply: 'Its measures be in proportion, its width and length shall correspond.' Since only one ark was built, as against eight Jaredite vessels, one would hardly expect the dimensions to be the same.

"Seven, 'Furthermore in the First Nineveh Version the boat ... has a door to be shut during the storm flood.' The various names for the boat 'designate "a boat which can be closed by a door," i.e., practically a "house-boat," expressed in the Hebrew story by an Egyptian loanword, *Tevah*, "ark" originally meaning "box, chest, coffin," an essential part of which is its "cover" or "lid."

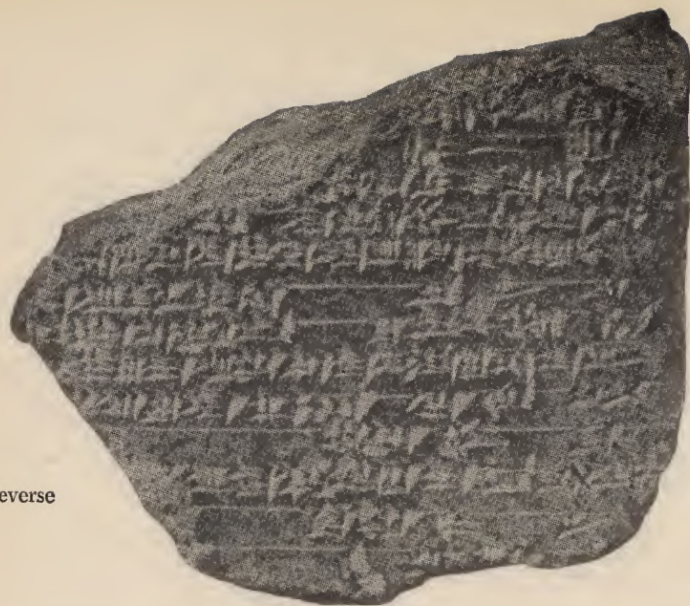
"Eight, '... the boat has ... a door to be shut during the storm flood and at least one "air-hole" or "window" (*nappashu*, li. 136).'

"Nine, 'The vessel built by Ut-napishtim being such a "house boat" or *magur*, this word could subsequently also be rendered ideographically by MA-TU, a "deluge boat" ... A *magur* boat, then is a "house boat" in which gods, men and beasts can live comfortably, fully protected against the waves washing overboard, the driving rain from above and against the inclemencies of wind and weather.'

"Ten, '... Sin's *magur* boat is called "A bright house" (*esh azag*), in which at times he dwells, as other Babylonian gods ... do in their boats, when visiting each other in their temples ... The Moon god himself is represented as "sailing in a bright *magur* boat through the midst of heaven."

"Eleven, in a *magur* boat 'men and beasts live comfortably ...' Nineveh 2:Ut-napishtim is to take 'domestic animals of the field, with wild beasts of the field, as many as eat grass.' Herrmann has recently observed that we are to think of the earliest ships as transports for cattle. The Nippur version mentions 'the beasts of the field, the birds of heaven.'

"Twelve, 'The Storm-winds with exceeding terror, all of them together raced along the deluge, the mighty tempest (?), raged with them ... and the mighty ship over the great waters the storm-wind had tossed



Reverse



Right Edge

Fragments of tablet found at Nippur on which is recorded the "Nippur" version of the Deluge Story. c. 2100 B. C.

"Nothing is more remarkable in my opinion," said Blank, "than the specific statement of Ether that the submarine nature of his ships made them 'like unto the ark of Noah,' since that aspect of the ark has never been rightly understood."

"That is quite right," Dr. Schwulst volunteered. "Ancient, medieval, and modern Bible illustrators have made it perfectly clear that they have not the remotest idea what the real ark was like. The window and the door are the only peculiarities mentioned in the brief three verses in Genesis. (6:14-16.) Old pictures depict the ark either as nothing but a big box or chest or as a regular boat: attempts to combine the two forms lead to comical combinations that show plainly enough how inadequate information has been on the subject. I think it is remarkable that the word for *window* in the Babylonian texts, *nappashu*, means literally *breather* or *ventilator*. This is also the interpretation in Ether, whereas the window in the ark is called a *tohar* in Genesis, that is a *shiner* or *illuminator*."

THE SHINING STONES

WHICH do you think is the older version?" F. asked, "the air hole or the skylight?"

"That would be hard to say," was the reply, "since both are found in the Babylonian texts. As a matter of

fact, the rabbis could never agree as to just what the *tsohar* was."³⁰

"What did they say it was?"

"Some said it was a window, but others maintained it was some kind of luminous object by which Noah could tell night from day."³⁰

"Why would he need a gadget to tell night from day?" Blank asked with interest.

"Because according to some, the ark was completely covered over like a tightly shut box, and according to others, it was under the water a good deal of the time."

"Hold on!" said F. with a laugh. "Aren't we getting mixed up with Mr. Jared's ships?"

"And why not?" Blank replied. "Ether himself says the two types of ship followed the same model."

"As a matter of fact," said Professor Schwulst half to himself, "there may be something to that. Now that I think of it, that luminous object in the ark was supposed to have been some sort of shining stone."

"So that's the source of your Jaredite story!" F. cried with satisfaction.

"Not at all," the Professor rejoined. "The Ether version I believe is a much fuller one than that of the rabbinical tradition and contains some very archaic and significant material that is not found in the other. It has been many years ago, but I am almost sure I once saw some important studies on the shining stones."

"I wish you could remember where it was," said Blank. "I long ago gave up hope of finding a parallel to the story anywhere, nor have I ever found anyone either here or abroad who could give me the slightest help on it. This episode in the book of Ether has caused so much sarcastic comment that I have been determined to get to the bottom of it. I must admit it does seem a bit fantastic."

"In the study of ancient things," the Professor intoned with uplifted finger, "it is just the fantastic and incongruous which opens the door to discovery—never forget that. In scholarship as in science, every paradox and anomaly is really a broad hint that new knowledge is awaiting us if we will only go after it. Now as to these shining stones, I seem to remember some rather ambitious comparative studies on the subject, inspired by the Sumerian epic material—the Gilgamesh story, that was it!"

"Do you mean that the shining

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. . . Thus the Sumerian version. Jensen explains MA-TU as a "deluge boat," seeing in it "a boat driven by the wind," "A sailing vessel." . . . But a *magur* boat was written ideographically MA-TU, literally "a deluge boat," not because it was a sailing boat driven by the wind or rather the hurricane (*abubu, shubtu*), but because it possessed certain qualities which rendered its use especially effective during the deluge, when its exclusive purpose was to carry the remains of life and to protect men and beasts against the waters from below and the pouring rains from above. Though driven by the storm it had 'nothing in common with a boat in full sail, (and) nowhere . . . is a sail mentioned, nor would it have been of much use in such a hurricane as described . . . Besides, we observe that the pictures of the Tyrian boats referred to have no sails.' A *magur* boat was driven by the wind, but not with sails.

"Thirteen. 'It shall be a house-boat carrying what is saved of life,' says the Nippur version, its purpose being to preserve life and offer full protection 'against the waves washing overboard.'"

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stone episode is found in the Gilgamesh epic?" Blank asked with surprise.

"No, no! At least not directly. I distinctly remember that there were Greek, Sanskrit, and Syriac versions of the story as well as Babylonian." Dr. Schwulst frowned in concentration, not a little annoyed that his vaunted memory should have betrayed him if only for the moment. Then turning with a gesture of impatience to his friends: "If you gentlemen will give me just a few hours, I am sure I can run this thing down."

"Oh, don't bother," F. said, but it was the wrong thing to say.

"What do you mean 'Don't bother'?"

A thing like this is not to be lightly brushed aside. The story of stones that shine is too strange and rare a thing to let go unexamined. What are we doing here if we are not curious about such things—helping lazy young people to get bread-and-butter degrees maybe? So now I am going to bother myself about this little matter, and if you men care to come back tomorrow perhaps I will have some information for you."

(To be continued)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

²⁸The quotations in the list when not otherwise designated are all from Hilprecht, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-55.

³⁰Contenau, *Le Deluge*, pp. 84 ff.

The Family's Night Home

(Continued from page 563)

"I know," Mama shook her head, "she collects things like a dark corner. But be patient; there'll be day of reckoning, and she'll be taught a lesson. The Lord doesn't permit joy in ill-gotten gains for long."

I smiled smugly. "Well, I have 'em, and I'm going to keep 'em," I told myself. "Unless—unless Yolanda might go up and sneak them back while I wasn't around." I resolved to go upstairs immediately and put them safely in my pocket.

I opened the door and stepped into the kitchen.

"Have you fed the lambs?" Mama asked, knowing I was there without even turning her head.

"No, but I will, just as soon as I go upstairs a minute." I hurried past and up to my room. Taking the sachet and perfume and earrings, I wrapped them carefully in the blue lace handkerchief. Then with a triumphant smile I tucked them into my pocket and slid down the banister.

They were still discussing me. "I ought to take those things away from her," Yolanda said threateningly.

I clomped in, pretending not to hear. "Kin I take some sugar lumps to the lambs?" I wheedled, as though I didn't plan to eat some myself.

"I suppose so," Mama reached into the sugar jar, "but don't eat more than one yourself."

The twin lambs teetered on their wobbly legs like novices on stilts,

fairly shivering with eagerness as I approached with their bottles. The ground was still muddy from the rain, and I nearly skated off the rail as I climbed over.

"Here Bumpkin and Pumpkin," I laughed as they clamored anxiously. "I brought you a sugar lump." I reached in my pocket to pull them out, but to my dismay a corner of the lace handkerchief caught in my closed fist, and out it came, too, spilling its contents into the mud.

The perfume bottle struck a rock and splattered its enticing fragrance over the lambs, and before I could collect my wits to snatch the other bobbles, Bumpkin and Pumpkin had pranced them into the ooze.

Gone! My whole fortune wiped out in a single moment! All, that is, save the blue lace handkerchief! Having lost faith in my pocket, I held that in my teeth as I finished feeding the lambs.

I knew I hadn't better go to the house with mud all over me, so I stopped to wash at the pump. I hung the handkerchief carefully on the hitching post so it wouldn't get splashed, solicitous as a hen with only one chick.

Up until now I hadn't considered the Lord and his day of reckoning in this misfortune, but as I bent over the pump there was a whistling sound, and I looked up to see a whirlwind dipping and swaying over the ground.

I watched fascinated as it picked