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There Were Jaredites, Part III: The Shining Stones— continued

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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 third part consists of a review of shining stones in ancient mythologies.

There Were Jaredites

by Dr. Hugh Nibley

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

The Shining Stones—Continued

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS later the orientalist received his two friends with beaming benevolence and a table piled with old texts and a number of bound periodicals.

"Well, sirs," he began as they sat down around the table, "I have something for you! Not much, of course—that would take some time—but enough. Let us begin by considering the Jewish sources that worried us yesterday, going from the latest to the earliest. The Midrash Rabbah tells us that the various conflicting opinions of the rabbis as to the true nature of the *tsohar*, the light in the ark, simply demonstrates the fact that none of them knew what it was.³¹ Rabbi Akiba ben Kahmana, for example, says it means a skylight, while R. Levi says it was a precious stone. R. Phineas, quoted by R. Levi, explains that 'during the whole twelve months that Noah was in the Ark he did not require the light of the sun by day or the moon by night, but he had a polished gem which he hung up: when it was dim he knew that it was day, and when it shone he knew it was night.'³² To illustrate this odd arrangement, Rabbi Huna tells a story: 'Once we were taking refuge from (Roman) troops in the caves of Tiberias. We had lamps with us: when they were dim we knew that it was day, and when they shone brightly we knew that it was night.'³³ The reference to hiding from the Romans shows that this tradition is at least two thousand years old. But all such stories seem to go back to a single source, a brief notice in the Jerushalmi or Palestinian Talmud, which reports that Noah was able to distinguish day from night by certain precious stones he possessed, which became dim by day and shone forth by night."³⁴

"Is it not quite conceivable," F. interposed, "that anyone might embroider these accounts into the Jaredite story?"

"There is no limit to the embroidery that can be put on a tale, I sup-

pose, but it so happens that the peculiar elaboration of the story in Ether follows other and much fuller and older versions—far older, in fact, than anything in the Talmud. And none of those versions was known when I was a boy. That is what makes me wonder. What is more, it seems to me quite unthinkable that anyone writing the Book of Mormon at that time either exploited the Jewish sources or knew about them."

"Why unthinkable?" F. asked.

"Well, first with regard to using the material, you can be sure that anyone who had access to this old Jewish stuff, whether at first or second hand, had a gold mine of useful information at his disposal. Yet he never makes use of any of it with the exception of this one little note. Along with that, the chances of anyone coming across this item seems infinitely remote when one considers where it is found, namely, in the Palestinian Talmud."

"What is so inaccessible about the Palestinian Talmud?"

"Everything. One might have been reading sometime in the Babylonian Talmud, but in the Jerusalem Talmud? Never!—only eminent rabbis ever read or cite it.³⁵ Do you see these four modest volumes? They represent all the printed editions of the Palestine Talmud that have ever appeared! Two of them came out after 1860, and could not have been used by the author of Ether; the other two are the Bomberg edition of 1523 and 1524 which as you see contains no commentary, and the Cracow edition of 1609, with a very short commentary on the margin."

"How about translations?" Blank inquired.

"Even worse. In 1781 a small section was translated into German—it was not the section in which our story occurs, by the way—and there was nothing after that until the German translation of 1880. Schwab's French translation done between 1871 and 1890 is the best known; Schwab also undertook an English version in 1886 but only completed the begin-

ning of it. But no translation was available in any modern language in 1830, and who could read the original?³⁶ Who can read it today? It is in the difficult West Aramaic dialect—not the East Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud, which is close to modern Hebrew—and so many of the words are technical that nobody knows what they mean anyway.³⁷ It is much smaller and is considered much duller than the Babylonian Talmud—and who reads that? Right now Professor Zeitlin is loudly proclaiming that the host of scholars at work on the Dead Sea Scrolls are one and all unqualified to read medieval Hebrew—which means that he is about the only man in America who can! The scholars and ministers who studied Hebrew in America in 1830's knew rabbinical Hebrew no better than they do today; their whole interest was in the Old Testament, and if any of them ever looked into the Talmud, you can be sure it was not the Jerushalmi. Then too we must not overlook the fact that the Jewish accounts do *not* say that Noah used the gems for illumination, but only to distinguish day from night."

"That seems like a strange quibble," said F.

"Yet all the sources insist on it. They never come out and say that Noah used the stones for lamps, but only that he used them to tell day from night. That no doubt seems strange to you, but it happened to be a subject of considerable concern and discussion among the ancient doctors, both Jewish and Moslem. They had a good deal to say about distinguishing when it was day and when night by such ingenious methods as hanging up a black and a white thread side by side or by distinguishing certain forms or objects of certain size and certain shape. You see in their way of thinking it is extremely important for ritual reasons to know when it is night and when it is day. There was a whole branch of divine science devoted to the subject, and this naturally was the aspect of the shining stones that would interest any

rabbi—not the problem of illumination. I can assure you that only a rabbi would ever have read this passage in America a hundred years ago. Apart from all this, it is quite plain to me that the account in Ether was not taken from the Jewish sources. As I said, it is much nearer to a far more ancient source of recent discovery; for example, your book of Ether says that the brother of Jared made transparent stones by ‘moltening’ them out of rock—the word is perfectly good English, by the way, though archaic. Where do you think he got the idea?”

“I have read the book to oblige Blank here,” said F. “As I recall, the Lord is supposed to have told him what to do.”

“Nothing of the sort!” cried Blank. “In building his ships there were three problems which the brother of Jared recognized as insoluble by conventional means, namely the problem of navigation under condition of perpetual storm with overcast skies, the problem of ventilation, and the problem of lighting. (Ether 2:19.) As to the last of these, the Lord told him that the usual methods of lighting by windows and fire would not do—the wording of Ether 2:23 makes it quite clear that those *were* the ordinary methods used. But instead of solving the Jaredites’ problem for them by giving them a light on the spot or telling them how to make one, the Lord put the brother of Jared entirely on his own by retorting to his question, ‘. . . Lord, wilt thou suffer that we shall cross this great water in darkness?’ with another question: ‘What will *ye* that I should do that *ye* may have light in your vessels? . . .’” (Ether 2:22, 25.)

“And being thus thrown back on his own resources, what would the great man do?” Schwulst asked with a smile. “He would do what he had done before—follow the example of Noah. So he proceeded to cast some clear transparent stones in the hope that they might be made to shine in the dark.”

“Did Noah do *that*?” F. asked with astonishment.

“That is the part I am now coming to, if you will have a little patience. First of all, then, the brother of Jared made some transparent stones by ‘moltening’ them out of

rock, a process requiring a very high temperature indeed. Now the oldest writings of India, reporting her oldest traditions, have a good deal to say about a particular stone that shines in the dark;³⁸ such a stone, we are told, can be produced only by subjecting a stone or the heart of a person who died of poison to terrific heat—it must in fact be kept in an exceedingly hot fire for no less than nine years! This would turn it to a perfectly clear, transparent crystal, we are told, and this crystal ‘would illuminate even the deepest darkness and sometimes shine as brightly as the sun.’³⁹ Meyer and Printz have traced this strange belief from India to China and the West, where it is mentioned by some of the most celebrated scholars of the Middle Ages. It was even believed in Europe that the Holy Grail was such a jewel and of such fiery power that the phoenix-bird cremated itself in its heat and was thus reborn, for among other things the stone had the power of regeneration.”⁴⁰

“And what,” said F., “has that to do with the shining stones of the ark?”

“A great deal, if you will follow me. The stone was known to the Greeks and hence to the Middle Ages as the *Pyrophilos* or ‘Friend of Fire,’ and is most fully described in the Indian sources which say it was a perfectly transparent crystal and also went by the name of ‘Moonfriend’ and *Jalakanta* or ‘that which causes the waters to part.’ For among all its marvelous properties, such as protecting its bearer from poisons, lightning, fire, and enemies, its most particular power and virtue was that it enabled its possessor to pass unharmed through the depths of the waters.⁴¹

“Dear me!” Blank interrupted. “That is surely something of a coincidence: a transparent stone formed with fierce heat that shines in the dark and guides and preserves its owner beneath the waves! Where do you think the Indians got all that?”

“That has been the subject of considerable search,” Schwulst replied, “and it is quite clear that the tradition did not originate in India, though it may have been brought there at a very early time by an offshoot of the same Indo-European people to whom the story has been traced far to the

north. But it has been so traced only by following a trail that led to the earliest Babylonian accounts of guess what—the deluge! Later writers quote a letter from the philosopher Aesculapius to the Emperor Augustus, in which he describes the Pyrophilus as the heart of a poisoned man turned into stone by nine years in the furnace; he also says that Alexander the Great possessed such a stone, which he carried in his belt, but that once while he was bathing he laid the belt aside, and a serpent stole the stone and vomited it into the Euphrates.⁴² Aristotle tells the same story three hundred years earlier, and other Greek writers know of it many years before Alexander was born.⁴³ In these older versions the stone is interchangeable with the plant of life—it was a life-giving stone, as the case of the phoenix shows—or the “medicine of immortality.”⁴⁴ In this form the story is identical with the prehistoric Sumerian tale of Gilgamesh and the plant of life, as many scholars were prompt to recognize as soon as the latter was published towards the end of the nineteenth century. Printz points out that this relationship illustrates both ‘the immense span of time’ over which traditions can survive and the degree to which they can become distorted in the process of transmission and still preserve clearly recognizable traits.⁴⁵ This story, in fact, seems to go back to that pre-Sumerian epic milieu that Kramer talks about. In the oldest Babylonian version only one person can tell the hero how and where to get the plant of life, and that person is Ut-napishtim, the Babylonian Noah. He it was who had possessed the plant of life which from the earliest times seems to be confused with a shining stone.”⁴⁶

“Where do we find the stone?”

“In the west—in Syria. There we find a most interesting series of ritual texts which for fulness and detail are hardly to be matched anywhere. The actual documents cover a full two thousand years, and the things they deal with are far older, as a little comparative study will show. Through all that period they tell essentially the same story, the now well-known ‘Year-Drama’ in which the death and resurrection of the

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hero, his victory over the powers of the underworld, and his marriage with the Mother Goddess are the principal episodes. The hero himself goes by many names, but the ones that concern us here are Attis and Humbaba, whom Stocks has shown to be one and the same person.⁴⁷ Everyone knows about Attis who is identical with the Syrian Adonis who is identical in turn with the Egyptian Osiris, but as the pre-Sumerian Humbaba he is less familiar."

"A strange-sounding name," F. commented.

"It is a Hurrian name, like Noah," Schwulst replied. "That illustrates my remark that everything points to a mysterious people of the north. That opens up the way to a lot of investigation and speculation, but now let us consider the Syrian hero. The most celebrated shrine in the East in classical times was the cult center of this hero and his wife the Syrian goddess at Apeh. Lucian visited the shrine which he describes as the greatest cult center in the world. The principal legend of the place and that invoked most often to explain rites and customs observed there was the story of Deucalion and the flood, which Lucian recounts in detail, showing it to be quite close to the biblical account.⁴⁸ The vast throngs of pilgrims that came to Apeh from all parts of the world were shown the hole down which the waters of the flood were said to have retreated and told how Deucalion erected at that spot the first temple and the first building to be constructed after the deluge.⁴⁹ The most remarkable object in the temple was, according to Lucian, 'a stone which is called *lychnis*, and the name is very appropriate; for by night it gives off a good deal of light, which illuminates the whole shrine just like a lamp, though by day the glow is weak. It looks exactly as if it were burning.' This stone shone forth from the crown of an image of the lady in her capacity of moon-goddess.⁵⁰ Nothing could be more natural than to associate with the moon a stone that shines by night and is dim by day. You will recall that the principal designation of the shining crystal in the Indian descriptions is 'Moonfriend.'"

"We may also recall," Blank commented, "that the *magur-boat* of the Sumerian Noah was compared with the moon, not only because it was crescent-shaped and wandered through space for twelve months, but especially because it was illuminated by a miraculous light."

"Then couldn't the whole story of a miraculously illuminated ark have come down from an original moon-cult?" F. demanded.

"A boat may remind anyone of the moon after it is built," Blank replied, "but the moon cannot have supplied the model for any workable boat. The moon is always there for all to see, but one can only compare it with a boat after one has seen not only the moon but boats as well. You can see from that that our whole story must start with a boat. You know as well as I do that the oldest graves and the oldest temples in the world contain beautiful and accurate boat-models and sometimes full-sized boats. Whatever the symbolism may be, they are always real boats or scale models of such. Today the experts are playing around a good deal with the idea that these boats refer to some great primal migration, for which the ark of Noah is the archetype. Granted the boat theme, the ancients were free to add any ritual or mythological frills that caught their fancy, the most obvious being the moon motif which every poet discovers independently. But the whole thing began with a real boat, not with the 'nature myths' that were once so popular with scholars but have now been so completely discredited."

"On that point," said Professor Schwulst, "we must insist that the Babylonian coloring of this and many other tales of great antiquity does not imply for a moment that the story itself has a Babylonian origin. Take the Greek stories of Deucalion's flood, for example: They go back to pre-historic times and to sources far older than any Bible manuscripts we possess. Yet no one ever suggests that the deluge story originated with the Greeks. Why not? Simply because the Greek versions of the story have been known all along and did not need to be dug up by archaeologists. If they had first been discovered in the nineteenth century, you can be sure they would have been instantly

hailed as debunking the Bible! But let us return to our Syrian stone.

"Jirku has pointed out that the moon cult of Syria goes back to pre-historic times, so that what Lucian is describing is of great age—albeit overlaid, as such old traditions always are, by all sorts of mythologized and rationalized explanations.⁵¹ Macrobius, for example, says the image of the Lady was crowned with an arrangement designed to represent a sunburst of rays 'which symbolize the way in which Mother Earth is made to bring forth life by the fructifying rays sent from above.' In his day the stone was not working, apparently, but the crown on the image was designed to look as if it emitted a life-giving light.⁵² Carl Clemen believes that the report that one of the jewels that adorned the image of the Goddess actually shone in the dark is 'naturally an impossibility.'"⁵³

"Do you think there actually could have been such stone?" F. asked.

"I think you will find in Athanasius Kirchner that the ancients were familiar with the properties of such fluorescent stones as barite, which will shine for some time in the dark after exposure to the sunlight or after being placed near a fire. The question would require some looking into, but it is notable that all sources describe the shining stones only as *part-time* illuminators: they seem to fade out completely during the day. But after all what we are dealing with here is not scientific or historic fact, but literary and legendary coincidence, which can be just as instructive in its way. Here, for example, Stocks points out that the image of the ark at the great Syrian shrine was represented by an altar with a burning fire on it which seemed to be floating on a lake so that the devout could only gain access to it by swimming."⁵⁴

"A sort of baptism, eh?" said F. with a laugh.

"It is not so fantastic, at that," Schwulst replied. "Remember, we have in things like this a great wealth and intermingling of typology—one thing is the type of another. In the earliest times the shining stone was confused with the plant of life, as we have seen; and we have just noted that Macrobius describes the light of the lady's crown as life-giving."

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Servicemen in West Germany

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for nearly all to attend meetings throughout the mission area. A great help can be rendered by those desiring someone to be reached within the mission if they will send the necessary information to the West German Mission, Frankfurt am Main, Bettinastrasse, 55, Germany. This has been done many times with heartwarming results. The closeness and love felt within the groups are very deep, and many who have never before felt the need of the Church find here a great spiritual awakening.

In connection with the above program, an intensified drive for all group leaders to write the bishops and quorums of men not receiving Church publications has been begun. Group leaders are furnished form letters and information for this purpose. The importance of these to the men cannot be over-stressed. Many times they stand between the man and his succumbing to the great pressures of the world around him, and they serve as excellent missionary aids. At the present, only from ten to twenty percent of the men are receiving this support.

With many fine accomplishments behind it and many high objectives before it, the "Modern Mormon Battalion" marches on.

The strength it exhibits is best described by LDS Chaplain Theodore Curtis, Jr. Asked to speak to the Protestant chaplains on ways they could improve their "Protestant Men of the Chapel" program for lay personnel participation, Chaplain Curtis cited the activity being done among the LDS groups, and pointed out: "Wherever you have two LDS men come together, you have a 'Men of the Chapel' organization. Their program does not require pushing by monthly banquets with distinguished speakers. In fact, we have to get out of the way to keep from being run over."

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"I remember," said Blank, "that in the Book of Mormon Lehi had something like the equivalent of Jared's shining stone, and that was the Liahona. And we are told very plainly that there was "a type in this thing." (Alma 37:39-46.)

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"That is thoroughly characteristic of oriental thinking," Dr. Schwulst observed. "In a recent study on the Urim and Thummim, Schoneveld has emphasized the idea the Urim does get its name from the root Or-, which means light and does imply that it was some sort of shining stone; it was the chief jewel of the twelve gems on the ephod of the high priest, which were nothing less than 'the symbol of God's presence.' According to Schoneveld, these stones were not introduced by Moses, 'but were already known in the times before the institution of the high priest's ritual clothing.'⁵⁵ It has also recently been shown that the peculiar endings of the names *Urim* and *Thummim* are not Hebrew plurals at all, but much older endings."⁵⁶

"Strange how everything points to another people," Blank observed.

"Yes, Lucian already gives us a hint when he says that the Deucalion or Noah revered at the Syrian shrine was not a Greek or Oriental but a Scythian—an Indo-European from the north."⁵⁷

"Where did the Sumerians come from," asked F., "if they brought their culture and legends with them into Mesopotamia?"

"No question has been more debated than that one," was the reply, "but as of today we can do no better than to follow Speiser, who has sought the original home of the Sumerians long and diligently, and now concludes (where is that note?): '... the Sumerians arrived at the head of the Persian Gulf ... from the east, probably by sea, although their original home ... has to be sought beyond the Iranian province,' that is, away off in the middle of Asia somewhere—Speiser offers three suggestions: 'Transcaucasia, Transcaspia, and Farther Asia.'⁵⁸

"Then who knows what may lie behind all this?" cried the perplexed F.

"One thing is certain: it is a world we dream not of. If the story of Jared's boats is not a true one, it is certainly a supremely clever tale, incredibly ingenious to have come from anyone in 1830."

"Let us sum up this business of the shining stones as it stands," Blank suggested.

"A good idea," replied the Orientalist, "especially since I have led you on such a tortuous way. Well then,

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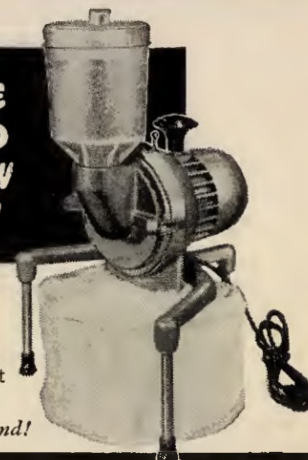
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first we found, tucked away in the corner of an old, obscure, and completely neglected Jewish writing a very brief passage that suggested, along with alternatives, that Noah had shining jewels or stones in the ark, which he used for telling night from day rather than as illumination. That is all the Jews tell us, so far as I can find out, and it is not much. Next we found some traditions about the forming of shining stones by a heat process, and noted that the world-wide dispersion of those traditions indicated their great antiquity. We found then that the shining stone thus produced everywhere went by the same name and was thought to possess the same marvelous properties and powers, the most remarkable of which was its power to enable its owner to pass through the depths of the water. Next it was easy to identify this stone with the very stone that Alexander the Great lost in the Euphrates in an episode which many scholars were quick to identify with a central occurrence in the Gilgamesh epic: the loss of the plant of Life which had once belonged to Utnapishtim, the Babylonian Noah, who alone could tell the hero Gilgamesh where and how to obtain it. Then we turned to the most renowned survival of a cult of Noah in the ancient world and found that the most remarkable cult object at that shrine was a wonderful stone that shone in the dark—Lucian actually claims to have seen it in operation. . . .”

“A monument to human gullibility,” F. interposed.

“You miss the point entirely,” Blank countered. “This stuff does not rely on its historical accuracy for its significance.”

“What would you say was significant about it, then?”

“For one thing it illustrates beautifully a thing we are now pointing out with increasing insistence, namely, that the wild, exotic, unbridled oriental imagination we hear so much about simply does not exist. Where, for example, could you find a more complete and total *lack* of creative imagination? The same old motifs occur over and over again for thousands of years, the only changes being the accretions of equally unoriginal

local stuff and the inevitable inaccuracies of transmission. Of originality not a spark! Always the same thing over and over again.”

“In other words, the wild excesses of the oriental fancy are themselves largely an invention of the wild excesses of western fancy!” Schwulst laughed.

“I think that is extremely important, for it shows that when we get a theme like the shining stones, we can be sure that it is not the product of some imaginative village storyteller but began either as a real event or by some unique and forgotten act of general literary creation.”

“As a matter of fact,” Schwulst commented, “it has been shown time and again that your village storyteller is one of the most reliable depositories of archaic lore, which he preserves intact through the centuries: No one could be less guilty of imagining things!”

“But what if the Ether story is only literary creation?” asked F.

“That makes no difference to its value as evidence. For the question is not, ‘How did the author of that book know about those *events*?’ but simply ‘How could he possibly have known anything about those *stories*?’ Remember, the key to the whole thing was the Gilgamesh epic which was not discovered until long after many editions of the Book of Mormon had appeared; without that source all the other materials from East and West remain quite meaningless. But as soon as students had access to that work they began pointing out borrowings and connections on every side, all pointing to a common origin. Knowing nothing, though, about the book of Ether, the scholars have obligingly demonstrated, among other things, that the wonderful Pyrophilus which has *all* the properties of Jared’s stones is to be found ultimately in the possession of Noah. Of those same stones the Talmud preserves a dim but unmistakable memory, a mere hint from which the details in Ether could never have been reconstructed, but none-the-less a witness which puts a final stamp of authenticity on the old story. More than that I cannot tell you now.”

(To be continued)

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³¹The rabbis “could not explain the meaning of Zohar . . .” *Midrash Rabbah*, Trsl. H. Freedman (London: Soncino Press, 1939), I, 244.

³²*Ibid.*, citing *Midr. Rab.* XXXI, 11.

³³*Loc. cit.*

³⁴*Talmud Jerushalmi, Pesahim* I, i, Schwab Trsl., Paris, 1882, V 2, cited by E. Mangelot, in F. Vigouroux, *Dictionnaire de la Bible* (Paris, 1894), I, 923. Mangelot’s own reflection is that “it is ridiculous to say with Rabbi Ahia-ben-Zeira that in the midst of the darkness of the Ark Noah could distinguish day from night by the aid of pearls and precious stones, whose luster grew pale by day and shone forth by night.”

³⁵M. Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud*, (1894), p. 62.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁷The Babylonian Talmud, “so rich in dialectical subtleties, and so full of technicalities and elliptical expressions, offers to the translator almost insurmountable difficulties. . . . It would sometimes require a whole volume of commentary to supplement the translation of a single chapter of the original. . . . This explains why the various attempts at translating the whole of the Babylonian Talmud have, thus far, proven a failure, so that as yet only comparatively few Masechtoth of this Talmud have been translated, and these translations are in many cases not intelligible enough to be fully understood by the reader who is not yet familiar with the original text and with the spirit of the Talmud.” *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90. Yet this Talmud is far simpler and infinitely better known than the Palestinian Talmud!

³⁸“The old Indian literature is full of the theme,” according to J. J. Meyer, “Das unverbrennbare Herz und der Edelstein Pyrophilus,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 86 (1932), p. 97. Though many jewels have been suggested as the original shining stone—sapphire, smaragd, etc., the favored candidate in Indian lore is the ruby, called the sun stone because of its fiery nature. *Ibid.*, 95 ff.

³⁹Regardless of the original substance; it was the hardening and purifying action of fire that achieved the miraculous transformation: it was believed that even hailstones, clear crystalline pellets, could be used to create jewels by fire! *Ibid.*, pp. 95-97. The result was always a clear crystal, *ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 97. Wilhelm Printz, “*Gilgamesh und Alexander*,” *Ztschr. d. Dt. Morgl. Ges.*, 85 (1931), 196-206.

⁴¹Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 99; Printz, *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁴²Printz, *op. cit.*, pp. 196 ff. quotes relevant passages from Albertus Magnus, Thomas Cantimpratensis, Conrad of Megenber, Vincent of Beauvais, Volmar, and others, all of whom give slightly varying versions.

⁴³The Aristotle passage is lost, though it is referred to as a source by later writers and quoted by an unnamed fourteenth century writer in a passage reproduced by Printz, *op. cit.*, p. 197. An earlier version than the Alexander story is given by a Scholiast to a lost play of Sophocles, in A. Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 2nd Ed., (Leipzig, 1889), p. 209.

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA.

⁴⁴It is called a *pharmakon agerasias* or "specific against old age" in the fragment cited in the preceding note; see below, n. 46.

⁴⁵Printz, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-200.

⁴⁶P. Jensen, *Assyrisch-babylonische Mythen und Epen*, in *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek* (Berlin, 1901), VI, 250-3. Lines 282 ff. from the XI Tablet of the Gilgamesh epic will illustrate the remarkable commingling of familiar motifs in this very ancient epic:

I will disclose, O Gilgamesh, a hidden thing
and . . . tell it to you.
That plant is like a thorn in the field.
Its thorn will pierce thy hand like a thorny
vine; it will pierce through thy hand.
When thy hands grasp that plant, thou
canst return again to thy land.
When Gilgamesh heard this
He opened the . . .
He tied heavy stones on his feet,
And they dragged him down into the
cosmic ocean (and he found the plant).
He cut the heavy stones loose, and
A second one he cast down to his

* * * * *

Then Gilgamesh (on the way home) saw a
pool of water, which was cold,
He went down into it and washed himself
with water.
A serpent smelled the fragrance of the plant,
came up . . . and took the plant away.
Then when he came back he mocked and
taunted (Gilgamesh),
Then Gilgamesh sat himself down and
wept. . . .

Though the stones on the feet are the key to the story, according to Printz, identifying the plant of life definitely with the shining stone Pyrophilos, which Alexander lost in the same way, even the casual reader will note in this brief excerpt various striking parallels to the story of man's fall.

⁴⁷H. Stocks, in *Beyrutus*, IV, 12.

⁴⁸Lucian, *De Syria Dea*, 12-13. Stocks, *op. cit.*, IV, 7-8, noting that Lucian's flood story is neither Babylonian nor Greek. He maintains, p. 10, that Lucian rightly refers to Deucalion, the local Noah, as a Scythian. Gilgamesh's friend and double Humbaba is obviously the Kumbabus whose legend Lucian here recounts: it is a version of the sacrifice and resurrection motif.

⁴⁹Lucian, *op. cit.*, 13.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, c. 32.

⁵¹A. Jirku, "Der Kult des Mondgottes im altor. Palästina-Syrien," *Ztschr. d. Dt. Mgl. Ges.* 100 (1951), 202-4, showing that the cult was prominent both at Ras Shamra and Jericho in very ancient times. The prominence of Kumbabus alone at the Syrian shrine is enough to guarantee the great age of its rites.

⁵²Macrobius, cited in Stocks, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁵³C. Clemen, *Lukians Schrift über die syrische Götter*, Heft 3/4, 1938, of *Der Alte Orient*, No. 37, p. 42.

⁵⁴Stocks, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁵⁵J. Schoneveld, in *Orientalia Neerlandica*, p. 222.

⁵⁶A. Jirku, "Die Mimation in den nordsem. Sprachen . . ." *Biblica*, 34 (1953), pp. 78 ff.

⁵⁷*Supra*, note 48.

⁵⁸E. A. Speiser, in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 23, p. 355.

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