

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

The Flood

No myth story is so widespread around the world as that of the Flood. It appears everywhere, among the folk legends of the Australian aborigines, the Inca Indians of South America, the North American Indians, the Chinese, the Greeks and the people of the Near East. The Hebrew story in the Bible is merely another version of that worldwide tradition. Theodore Gaster provided a summary of many of these Flood stories^{MLCOT}, including many of the tales collected by James Fraser^{FOT}.

One Greek story runs as follows:

Deucalion was the son of Prometheus. He reigned as king in the country of Phythia and married Pyrrha, the daughter of Epimetheus and Pandor, the first woman fashioned by the gods. Through some unknown fault Zeus wished to destroy the men of the earth. Deucalion, by the advice of Prometheus, constructed a chest or ark, and having stored in it what was needful he entered into it with his wife. Zeus poured a great rain from the sky upon the earth and washed down the greater part of Greece so that all men perished except a few, who flocked to the high mountains nearby. Then the mountains of Thessaly were parted and all the world beyond the Isthmus (of Gibraltar) and the Peloponnese was overwhelmed. But Deucalion, floating over the sea nine days and nights, grounded on Parnassus, and there, when the rains ceased, he disembarked and sacrificed to Zeus. Zeus sent Hermes to him and allowed him to choose what he would; he chose men. At the bidding of Zeus he picked up stones and threw them over his head; the stones became men. The stones which Pyrrha threw became women.

This tale of the Flood associated with the name of Deucalion is the Greek version most familiar to western students, yet it was not the only story. Ancient Greek learned men distinguished three such great catastrophes^{MLCOT}. The first flood took place in the time of Ogyges, the second in the time of Deucalion, and the third in the time of Dardanos. The name Ogyges (or Ogygos) gave us Egypt; the Og syllable comes from Oc. Ogyges founded the oldest city in Greece, long before the first Flood.

In India a Flood story goes as follows:

Manu was washing in a river when a fish came into his hands. The fish warned him that a great flood would carry away all creatures, and that if Manu would rear him he would save Manu from the flood. The fish outgrew a jar and a pit dug by Manu. Manu then placed the fish in the sea. That same year Manu obeyed the advice of the fish and built himself a ship. When the rains came Manu entered the ship; as the waters rose the fish came to him. He tied a rope around a horn on the fish which then towed him to a high mountain. The fish told him to fasten the ship to a tree. As the waters subsided he could gradually descend the mountain.

In Hindu folklore the slope of the northern mountains are often called “Manu’s descent.” The flood swept away all creatures; only Manu was left. By sincere worship a woman was produced within a year from clarified butter, sour milk, whey and curds he offered as a sacrifice. When he asked who she was she replied that she was his daughter. Through her he generated his race, the race of Manu.

A story from ancient Mexico relates the following:

The waters had been tranquil for fifty-two years. (Note a period equivalent to a Hebrew jubilee.) On the first day of the new Sun a great flood came which submerged all land including the mountains. This flood endured for fifty-two years. Warned by Tezcatlipoca a man named Nata and his wife Nena hollowed a log and entered it. When the waters subsided they came forth from their log, and seeing fish all about, roasted them. Some of the gods, seeing the smoke of the fire, asked the Divine Lord why smoke clouded the sky. Upon this complaint the Lord seized the fish and transformed them into dogs.

In another version the hero of the flood is Coxcox; his wife is Xochiquetzal. Their deluge comes at the end of the fourth Sun^{LAM}.

The Potawatomi Indians of North America had a flood hero who was named Messou.

One day while hunting with his lynxes, whom he called brothers, they gave chase to an elk. It entered a lake and as the lynxes followed to the center of the lake they found themselves submerged in deep water. When Messou arrived at the shore of the lake a bird told him that his brothers were at the bottom of the lake and that certain monsters held them there. At that instant the lake overflowed and inundated and drowned the whole earth. Messou, much astonished, forgot his lynxes while he meditated on ways to save the earth. He sent a raven to find a small piece of earth but the raven returned without success because the whole earth was completely covered by water. Messou then had an otter dive into the water but the depth prevented him from bringing back a piece of the earth. At last a

muskrat descended and returned with a small piece. With that bit of earth Messou restored the entire earth. He remade the trunks of trees and shot arrows at them which then became branches.

Many pages would be required to relate all the deeds of Messou in bringing back the earth to its former self, how he took vengeance on the monsters that had taken his brothers, and how he transformed himself into a thousand kinds of animals to bring forth new creatures. This great Restorer married a little muskrat and had children who then reseeded the world^{NAM}.

The oldest recorded story of the Flood was found on clay tablets from Sumer. The story was woven into an epic tale by later Babylonian-Assyrian scribes around 2,000 BC, now known as the *Gilgamesh Epic*^{GEOTP}. When the story was first discovered Gilgamesh was thought to be a mere legendary hero; the stories of his adventures were thought to be invented folk tales. But then modern scholarship took a second look; his name was found on the Kings List. He was the fifth king of the First dynasty of Erech. He was more than a legend.

Unfortunately, another problem arose. On the List he was assigned a reign of 126 years, more than could be accepted for a real mortal. Furthermore, he was the last of the line; all kings before him had legendary reigns; all kings after him were as mortal as any man today. He was called Divine; he was more than a mere mortal. Directly before him on the list is Dumuzi — again. But Dumuzi now lives for only 100 years compared to the Dumuzi before the Flood who lives 28,000 or 36,000 years. The two kings who reign before Dumuzi, Divine Lugulbanda, a shepherd, and Enmekar, lived 1200 and 420 years respectively. Obviously the records reflect a tradition of long-lived kings and divine origins.

The King Lists, which shows Dumuzi twice, must be contrivances. They reflect attempts to recapture traditions which, by that time, were distorted, corrupt, and unreliable as true history.

Virtually all Sumerian legends surround the four kings who are at the end of superhuman reigns. Gilgamesh is second in prominence only to Dumuzi, while Enmekar and Lugulbanda come next in their importance in the mythical tales. These four characters hold the unique position of being honored in Sumerian folk memory^{NET}.

The long ages on the Sumerian list after the Flood remind us of the biblical ages of the patriarchs after the Flood, Gen 11. Shem lived 600 years; Arpachshad 438 years; Shelah 433 years, and so on down to Terah, the father of Abraham, who lived 205 years. Abraham lived 175 years. If the Hebrew scribes borrowed their traditions of eight and ten ancestors before the Flood from the Sumerian traditions of eight and ten kings, and if they borrowed the long lives after the Flood from the same sources, then did they also borrow the story of the Flood? Since they lived in Babylonian captivity perhaps they took those stories and adapted them to their peculiar view of world history.

Examination of the Flood story in the Gilgamesh Epic shows how very similar it is to the Flood story in the Bible. Here I briefly outline important elements from the Babylonian version to show the physical nature of the Flood and the close parallels between the two sources. I follow the translation by Heidel^{GEOTP}.

The gods once lived on earth in the city of Shurippak, but they were dissatisfied with conditions. After council together with Anu, their Father, Enlil, their Counselor, Ninurta, their representative, and others, they decided to bring destruction through a deluge. However, Ea, the god of wisdom, privy to their councils, revealed the plan to Utnapishtim, the hero of the story. He was told that a great flood would come and that he was to prepare for it. He built a large ship, provisioned it, and brought his family, relatives and possessions aboard. He also placed in it the seed of all living things. That same evening darkening clouds appeared and sent a prodigious rain. Toward the gray of morning a dense black cloud suddenly rolled up from the horizon and all the gods began to let loose. Adad thundered; Nergal wrenched out the masts; Ninurta brought woe and disaster; the Annunaki gods came with flashing lightning. Everything turned black; you could not see your neighbor; even the gods were scared.

Ishtar cried out like a woman in travail. The lovely-voiced Lady of the gods lamented:

In truth the olden time has turned to clay, because I brought evil into the assembly of the gods! How could I command evil in the assembly of the gods? How could I command war to destroy my people? It is I who gave birth to my people! Like the spawn of fish they now fill the sea.

The Annunaki wept with her; the gods sat bowed and weeping.

The wind and the flood raged for six days and nights. On the seventh day the wind suddenly died down and the rain abated. The ship grounded on Mt. Nisir. Utnapishtim opened a hatch and sunlight struck his face. He surveyed the scene; not a sound was heard. Everything, including mankind, was turned to mud and clay. He began to weep, all the time looking around for land. On the seventh day he sent out a dove but it came back because it could find no place to rest. He sent out a swallow and it also came back. Finally he sent out a raven and it did not come back. On the twelfth day land began to appear. Utnapishtim then disembarked and offered a sacrifice to the gods. The gods were at first angry because he had escaped but Ea upbraided them for being so cruel. They should have killed only the guilty. They relented and honored Utnapishtim by conferring divine status on he and his wife.

The elements of this tale, dating earlier than 1800 BC, run close in parallel to the biblical account.

1) The Babylonian gods are dissatisfied with conditions on earth; God saw that the wickedness of man was great.

2) Ea, the god of the earth, revealed to Utnapishtim the divine decision to flood the earth; God revealed it to Noah.

3) Ea instructed Utnapishtim to construct a ship; God instructed Noah to build a ship.

4) Utnapishtim was told to provision it and to stock it with the seed of all living things; Noah was told to take seven pair of all clean animals and a pair of all unclean. He was to take food for himself and the animals.

5) Utnapishtim took his family and relatives; Noah took his wife, his sons, and their wives.

6) In the Babylonian tale it began to rain the same day Utnapishtim entered the ship; in the Bible it began to rain seven days later, Gen 7:10, or the same day, Gen 7:13.

7) The Babylonian rain lasted seven days and nights; the biblical rain forty days and nights.

8) Mighty windstorms came with the rain in the Babylonian tale; in the Bible they came after the rain to dry off the earth, Gen 8:1.

9) No precise time is given from the end of the rain to the appearance of dry land in the Babylonian tale; the Genesis account is confused: 150 days in Gen 8:3, 54 days in Gen 8:6, 10, 12. Note also the time from the beginning of the flood, 7:11, to the embarkation, 8:13,14.

10) Utnapishtim sends forth a dove, a swallow, and a raven; Noah sends forth a raven first which does not return and then a dove three times in succession.

11) Utnapishtim offers a sacrifice of an ox and a sheep; Noah offers a sacrifice of every clean animal and bird.

Although the two accounts differ in some details they could not have originated independently. Either the one was borrowed from the other, or they both derive from a common parent tradition. In the older Sumerian version Ziusudra is the hero of the story^{GEOTP}. (Berossus gives his name as Xisuthros.)

He hears a voice while standing by a wall. The voice tells him that mankind will be destroyed in a great flood. The portion relating the construction of the ship and its provisioning is missing from the surviving clay tablets. The story continues with a description of the great windstorms, with torrential rains for seven days and nights. The sun-god came forth, shedding his light over heaven and earth. Ziusudra opened a hatch and let the sun-god shine into the ship. Ziusudra then prostrates himself before the sun-god. The king kills an ox and offers an abundant sacrifice of sheep.

In order to bring out more fully the physical mechanisms I quote pertinent elements from the earlier Sumerian tale.

1) All the windstorms of heaven, exceedingly powerful, attacked as one. At the same time the flood swept over the cult centers.

2) For seven days and seven nights the flood swept over the land. And the huge boat was tossed about by the windstorms on the great waters.

3) Utu, the sun god, who sheds light on heaven and earth, came forth.

4) Ziusudra, the king, prostrated himself before Utu. The king killed an ox; he slaughtered a sheep.

After a break in the text there is further reference to the sun god.

5) *By the soul of heaven, by the soul of earth. do ye (Ziusudra) conjure him, that he may . . . with you. By the soul of heaven, by the soul of earth, O An and Enlil, do ye conjure, and he will . . . with you.*

Similar elements can be listed from the biblical account:

1) Gen 2:6: (Before the Flood) there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

2) Gen 7:11: . . . the fountains of the great deep were broken up; the windows of heaven were opened.

3) Gen 8:1: . . . and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided.

4) Gen 8:22: While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease.

5) Gen 9:11: *And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.*

6) Gen 9:13: *I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of a covenant between men and the earth.*

7) Gen 9:20: *And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine and was drunken, and he was uncovered in his tent.*

Near East scholars debate the missing word in the Sumerian cuneiform text; what should it be that *“he may . . . with you”* and *“he will . . . with you?”* From our daily experience we see no remarkable fact that Utu, the sun-god, shone forth. We see the sun almost daily. However, if the word were “abide” or “remain” we would cast a different light on the question. Prior to the deluge the sun did not shine in the sky as it does today. Ziusudra was surprised by it. This suggestion is supported by the covenant God made with Noah. The sign of the covenant was the bow in the clouds, the rainbow. It also was a new phenomenon. If direct sunlight did not appear on earth prior to the Flood there would be no rainbows; if direct sunlight appeared afterward, rainbows could be observed. What would prevent the sun from shining? Dust clouds in space? Today we do not experience direct sunlight when there is a cloud cover. Is it possible there was a constant cloud cover prior to the Flood which enveloped the entire earth? If that cover broke at the time of the Flood men would be surprised at the sun. Then they would also observe rainbows. *“The windows of heaven were opened.”*

Other factors enter into this query. Although the biblical account does not portray the great windstorms which took place at the time of the heavy downpour, the Sumerian and Babylonian myths retain this physical element. They were so strong they tore the masts out of Utnapishtim’s ship and rocked his boat mercilessly. This element of the myth suggests tremendous atmospheric disturbance. Extreme temperature and pressure gradients existed around the planet, perhaps greater than those which cause tornados and hurricanes. If the earth

were surrounded by a constant cloud cover prior to the Flood this cover had to be formed by water vapor. There would have been a huge volume of water continually hanging in the atmosphere. At the time of the Flood this huge volume of water dumped onto the earth, creating havoc all over the globe. All low-lying areas would have been inundated. Survivors would have been on the mountains, as the myths portray.

But what would cause this great change?

Other clues are provided. Before the Flood mists go up from the ground to water the ground. The seasonal variations of rain and dry did not then exist. Perhaps there was rainfall but it was mild compared to the torrential downpours we experience today. After the Flood the seasons came: summer and winter, cold and heat, seedtime and harvest. Prior to the Flood there were no summer and winter but rather a constant temperature. The earth saw continual plant growth, not cyclic seasons. The story in the Bible says that the very foundations of the earth were shaken, the fountains of the great deep were broken up. There was a tremendous wracking of the globe to cause violent earthquakes. Furthermore, Noah and Yu were surprised by the fermentation of wine. Prior to the Flood microorganisms did not function as they do today; grape juice did not ferment. After the Flood new ecological conditions were created which permitted bacteria to grow.

What is the explanation behind these elements retained in the mythical accounts? Can we find a physical mechanism? Indeed, we can.

Our planet at this time revolves around the sun with an inclination of its axis. As a result of this inclination we experience the phenomena of summer and winter, spring and fall. The change of seasons is due to changes in quantity of sunlight which falls on different parts of the earth’s surface. In the northern winter the axis is tilted with the north pole away from the sun. This polar orientation causes the northern hemisphere to receive increasing exposure to sunlight as the earth moves farther around the sun. The change not only affects the temperature of the earth, it also affects the weather. In spring we in the northern hemisphere experience rain as the moisture patterns shift due to different mixing of polar and tropical air masses. Thunderstorms develop where hot air meets cold air. Tornadoes and wind storms arise. In the summer these tend to stabilize until fall brings on hurricanes and the fall rains. And so on into winter and back to spring.

If the planet were to revolve around the sun with no inclination of axis the great seasonal changes would not exist. Since all parts of the planet would then receive constant amounts of sunlight the air masses would not seek different equilibrium conditions during the year. The tropical regions would receive the most sunlight, the polar regions the least. But since no mixing of air masses takes place tornadoes and thunderstorms, hurricanes and windstorms, would not occur. The atmosphere would become stable, perhaps with breezes blowing in an easterly direction due to the earth’s rotation, with gentle morning or evening showers, but not with the meteorological violence we experience today.

Furthermore, since the air masses would be stable, great amounts of moisture might accumulate in the atmosphere to create a large cloud cover. It is possible that a canopy would build to completely surround the earth. This canopy would act like a greenhouse, permitting solar energy to be absorbed but inhibiting escape of heat through infrared radiation. We experience such phenomena on cloudy days and nights when the average ground temperature remains warmer. This phenomena might also cause all portions of the earth's surface to receive moisture differently from what we know today. The deserts once were lush pastureland but over the past ten thousand years they gradually changed into wasteland as prevailing winds moved to different directions. With a cloud canopy, and with no mixing of winds to divert moisture, it is possible that the deserts would receive moisture in large quantities. This would produce luxuriant growth. Thus the wilderness would be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field into a forest. Then a mist would rise up to water the whole face of the earth as it did in the days of Adam and Eve. Evidence of the effects of constant moisture can be seen along the coast of northern California where temperatures are moderate, and where sea breezes bring moisture in from the ocean. The Sequoia and the Redwoods, as well as numerous shrubs, attest to this effect. Similar effects may be seen along the western coast of Ireland. Indeed, the great trees live to be two thousand years old, and grow to giant size.

The greenhouse effect, and the stability of the atmosphere, have been verified scientifically on the planet Venus. That planet revolves around the sun with little or no inclination of its axis. Except for the intense heat and pressure of its surface, Venus shows how this model works. Thus scientific measurements of Venus and observation of flora on this world show that a mechanism exists whereby God can change the meteorological and biological conditions of the planet. Then the desert might blossom like the rose and men might, indeed, experience increasing length of life. Out of these meteorological and biological changes would come great changes in human condition. No longer would the seasonal problems of colds and influenza afflict mankind. Other biological changes would take place to greatly modify microorganisms. Even aging processes would be affected, (note the huge trees), and men would then begin to live far beyond a hundred years. There would be a golden age.

Thus it was prior to the Flood. A huge body of water had accumulated in the atmosphere in a constant cloud cover. The earth axis tilted and the atmosphere could no longer hold the water vapor; the atmosphere became unstable; it fell to the ground in a tremendous deluge. Giant windstorms were let loose. There was a great wracking of the globe. The rotational energy was not greatly modified; the earth continued to spin on its axis. But the north pole pointed to a different direction in the sky. We do not know the cause but the myths say it came about at the hand of the gods, or God, as a judgment.

The ages of the Sumerian King lists suggest that the cycles are related in some way to cosmic periods. Perhaps the cycles of the earth, and the behavior of man, are interrelated according to some master cosmic cycle and overcontrol from on high.

The myths have numerous remarks about the tilting of the earth and the physical conditions which prevailed prior to the Flood. Derk Bodde writes that Kung-kung fought unsuccessfully with Chuan-hsu to become ruler of China and in his rage at defeat he caused the pillar of Heaven and the cord of earth to break off. Nu-kua, (note Inanna's lament), tried to patch up Heaven^{MAW}. Nonetheless, Heaven and Earth at that time sloped toward one another in the northwest, but have since tilted away from one another in the opposite direction. That is why the astral bodies of Heaven continue to this day to move in a westerly direction At that time wind and rain brought no calamities, sun and moon equably distributed their light (through the cloud cover), and the planets did not deviate from their courses.

R. B. Dixon writes that in the New Hebrides the people believed that heaven was originally low^{OM}. A woman struck it with her pestle as she was pounding food, whereupon she angrily told the sky to rise higher and it did so.

This same theme of raising of the heavens which once were low is repeated in the Philippines, in Indonesia, and in Micronesia. In Polynesia the people believe the god Tawhaki stamped on the floor of heaven, which cracked so that waters flowed through and covered the earth. Formerly the sky was low and close to the earth; a deity later lifted it up to its present place. The Dasun of North Borneo declare that the sky, originally low, retreated when six or seven suns were killed. The Dyaks of Sarawak say that a serpent once devoured all their harvest. When the people set up a watch one night they saw the serpent. One of their number chopped off its head and cooked it for breakfast. Immediately the sky was overcast as dark clouds rolled up and a terrible rain-storm caused a flood from which only a few people escaped who succeeded in reaching the highest hills.

In another version of the story a great hurricane resulted from the capture of the serpent and swept away all the houses. Velikovsky quoted Augustine writing in *The City of God*^{WIC}:

From the book of Marcus Varro, entitled *Of the Race of the Roman People*, I cite word for word the following instance: "There occurred a remarkable celestial portent; for Castor records that in the brilliant star Venus, called Vesperugo by Plautus, and the lovely Hesperus by Homer, there occurred so strange a prodigy, that it changed its color, size, form, course, which never happened before nor since. Adrastus of Cyzicus, and Dion of Naples, famous mathematicians, said that this occurred in the reign of Ogyges."

Numerous other tales could be recounted to show how the old people of this world remembered the cataclysmic cycles of ages past.