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# THE ANCHOR BIBLE

# GENESIS

INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION, AND NOTES

BY

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## 7. PRELUDE TO DISASTER

(vi 1-4: J)

VI 1 Now when men began to increase on earth and daughters were born to them, 2 the divine beings saw how beautiful were the human daughters and took as their wives any of them they liked. 3 Then Yahweh said, "My spirit shall not shield man forever, since he is but flesh; let the time allowed him be one hundred and twenty years."

4 It was then that the Nephilim appeared on earth—as well as later—after the divine beings had united with human daughters to whom they bore children. Those were the heroes of old, men of renown.

## NOTES

vi 2. *divine beings*. Literally "sons of God/gods." The term *'elōhīm* is here clearly differentiated from Yahweh (vs. 3). Elsewhere *E* employs the former in the sense of "Fate, Providence," and the like (see NOTE on xx 13). Here, however, the main stress is on "immortals" as opposed to "mortals."

*human daughters*. Literally "the daughters of man," in balanced contrast to the above.

3. *shield*. The traditional "abide in" is a guess lacking any linguistic support. For this interpretation, based on Akk. *dinānu* "substitute, surrogate," see JBL 75 (1956), 126 ff.

*since he is but flesh*. This clause stands for Heb. *b'šaggam*, which is obscure except for the preposition *b'*. A different analysis of the components yields "by reason of their going astray [he is but flesh]." But the first interpretation is superior, though still highly uncertain.

4. *Nephilim*. Named also as a giant race in Num xiii 33. There, however, the context implies that the people found by the spies were like the very Nephilim of old.

*united with*. Literally "came to," in the idiomatic sense of "cohabited with." This idiom appears to match the circumlocution used in iv 1.

Actually, however, there is one outstanding difference. Whereas "to have experience of" can be applied to either sex, "to come to" refers in this connection only to the male who visits a woman's quarters; cf. xxx 16, xxxviii 16.

*men of renown*. Literally "men with a name"; cf. Gilg., Yale Tablet, column v, line 7: "a name that endures will I make for myself."

## COMMENT

The undisguised mythology of this isolated fragment makes it not only atypical of the Bible as a whole but also puzzling and controversial in the extreme. Its problems are legion: Is what we have here an excerpt from a fuller account? Why was such a stark piece included altogether? Does its present place in the book imply a specific connection with the Flood? Is the stated period of 120 years meant as a deadline for mankind to mend its ways? On these and many similar points arising from the all too laconic passage before us there have been innumerable conflicting opinions, with few if any concrete gains. Of late, however, thanks mainly to the discovery of pertinent literary links, some of the scattered pieces of the puzzle have begun to fall into place. To be sure, the nature of the fragment is such as to discourage confident interpretation. But a semblance of an intelligible pattern appears to be indicated at long last.

The passage is dated explicitly to the time of the initial appearance of the Nephilim, who are described as "the heroes of old"; the LXX version translates the noun as "giants." Now Greek mythology (Hesiod, Pseudo-Apollodorus) recalls an unsavory stage in the history of the gods, which involves the leading triad of the pantheon: Uranus (Sky) wars against his children, but is defeated and emasculated by his son Cronus, who is vanquished in turn by his own son Zeus. The latter, however, must then do battle with a group of giants known as Titans, and subsequently with a particularly menacing monster named Typhon.

A closely related Phoenician tradition is reported by Philo of Byblos, in the name of a much older author, a certain Sanchunyathon. This relationship is so prominent that ultimate derivation of the Phoenician material from Greek sources has been suggested more than once (cf. E. G. Kraeling, "The Significance and Origin of Gen. 6:1-4," JNES 6 [1947], 193 ff., especially 205). It was further assumed that the biblical account under discussion may allude to a

similar commingling of primeval giants and celestial turpitude. Nevertheless, Sanchunyathon was regarded as an apocryphal figure, while the other Phoenician and Greek sources were too late to have been utilized by *J*; and so this hypothesis could not make headway.

The whole perspective, however, has recently changed with the discovery of Hittite texts containing translations of Hurrian myths. These myths parallel the Uranid cycle in such striking detail as to preclude any possibility of coincidence. Here, too, the sky god (Anu) is fought and emasculated by his son (Kumarbi), who in turn is vanquished by the storm god (Teshub). But before his victory is assured, Teshub must face a formidable stone monster (Ullikummi). The decisive battle takes place near Mount Hazzi, the classical Mount Casius, which is also the scene of Typhon's battle with Zeus (see H. G. Güterbock, "Oriental Forerunners of Hesiod," *AJA* 52 [1948], 123 ff.; cf. also *JCS* 5 [1951], 145). Since the Hurrian original goes back to the middle of the second millennium B.C., it has to be the source of the Phoenician and Greek versions as well as of the Hittite adaptation. (For possible Ugaritic parallels, cf. M. H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, 1955, pp. 4 f.) The Hurrians, for their part, are known to have utilized in this group of epics a number of Mesopotamian elements (e.g., the god Anu). The whole cycle, then, with all its bloodthirsty detail, was by *J*'s time familiar to much of the ancient world. It could hardly have been a stranger to *J* or his own immediate sources.

It is evident, moreover, from the tenor of the Hebrew account that its author was highly critical of the subject matter. It makes little difference whether *J* took the contents at face value or, as is more likely (cf. vs. 5), viewed the whole as the product of man's morbid imagination. The mere popularity of the story would have been sufficient to fill him with horror at the depravity that it reflected. A world that could entertain such notions deserved to be wiped out.

In these circumstances, the present position of the fragment immediately before the account of the Flood can scarcely be independent of that universal catastrophe. The story of the primeval titans emerges as a moral indictment, and thereby as a compelling motive for the forthcoming disaster. And the period of 120 years becomes one of probation, in the face of every sign that the doom cannot be averted. All of this accords with the separately established fact that the Flood story in Genesis, unlike its Mesopotamian analogues, was morally motivated.

## 8. THE FLOOD

(vi 5–viii 22: *J*, /*P*/)

VI <sup>5</sup>When Yahweh saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every scheme that his mind devised was nothing but evil all the time, <sup>6</sup>Yahweh regretted that he had made man on earth, and there was sorrow in his heart. <sup>7</sup>And Yahweh said, "I will blot out from the earth the men that I created, man and beast, the creeping things, and the birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I made them." <sup>8</sup>But Noah found favor with Yahweh.

<sup>9</sup>This is the line of Noah.—Noah was a righteous man; he was without blame in that age; Noah walked with God.—<sup>10</sup>Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

<sup>11</sup>The earth was corrupt in the view of God, and it was full of lawlessness. <sup>12</sup>And God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted their ways on earth.

<sup>13</sup>Then God said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with lawlessness because of them. So I am about to destroy both them and the earth. <sup>14</sup>Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make it an ark with compartments, and cover it inside and out with pitch. <sup>15</sup>This is how you shall build it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. <sup>16</sup>Make a sky light for the ark, terminating it within a cubit of the top. Put the entrance in the side of the ark, which is to be made with lower, second, and third decks.

<sup>17</sup>For my part, I am about to bring on the Flood—waters upon the earth—to eliminate everywhere all flesh in which there is the breath of life: everything on earth shall perish. <sup>18</sup>But with you I will establish my covenant, and you shall enter the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives. <sup>19</sup>And of all

else that is alive, of all flesh, you shall take two of each into the ark to stay alive with you; they must be male and female. <sup>20</sup> Of the birds of every kind, cattle of every kind, every kind of creeping thing—two of each shall come inside to you to stay alive. <sup>21</sup> For your part, provide yourself with all the food that is to be eaten, and store it away to serve as provisions for you and for them.”

<sup>22</sup> This Noah did. Just as God commanded him, so he did. /

**VII** <sup>1</sup> Then Yahweh said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for you alone have I found to be truly righteous in this age. <sup>2</sup> Of every clean animal take seven pairs, a male and its mate; and of the animals that are unclean, one pair, a male and its mate; <sup>3</sup> but seven pairs again of the birds of the sky, male and female, to preserve issue throughout the earth. <sup>4</sup> For in seven days’ time I will cause it to rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the surface of the earth all existence that I created.”

<sup>5</sup> Noah did just as Yahweh commanded him. / <sup>6</sup> Noah was in his six hundredth year when the Flood came—waters upon the earth. /

<sup>7</sup> Then Noah, together with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went inside the ark because of the waters of the Flood. <sup>8</sup> Of the clean animals and the animals that are unclean, the birds of the sky and everything that creeps on earth, <sup>9</sup> [two of each]<sup>a</sup>, male and female, came inside the ark to Noah, as God had commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup> As soon as the seven days were over, the waters of the Flood were upon the earth.

/ <sup>11</sup> In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month—on that day—

All the fountains of the great deep burst forth  
And the sluices in the sky broke open. /

<sup>12</sup> Heavy rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. / <sup>13</sup> On the aforesaid day, Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, Noah’s wife, and the three wives of his sons had entered the ark—<sup>14</sup> they as well as every kind of beast, every kind

<sup>a</sup> Evidently a gloss, see NOTE.

of cattle, every kind of creature that creeps on earth, and every kind of bird, every<sup>b</sup> winged thing. <sup>15</sup> They came inside the ark to Noah, two each of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. <sup>16</sup> Those that entered comprised male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded Noah. / Then Yahweh shut him in.

/ <sup>17</sup> The Flood came down upon the earth / forty days.<sup>c</sup> As the waters increased, they bore the ark aloft, so that it rose above the earth. / <sup>18</sup> The waters swelled and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark drifted on the surface of the water. <sup>19</sup> The waters continued to swell more and more above the earth, until all the highest mountains everywhere were submerged, <sup>20</sup> the crest reaching fifteen cubits above the submerged mountains. <sup>21</sup> And all flesh that had stirred on earth perished—birds, cattle, beasts, and all the creatures that swarmed on earth—and all mankind. / <sup>22</sup> All in whose nostrils was the faintest breath of life, everything that had been on dry land, died out. <sup>23</sup> All existence on earth was blotted out—man, cattle, creeping things, and birds of the sky; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark.

/ <sup>24</sup> When the waters over the earth had maintained their crest one hundred and fifty days, **VIII** <sup>1</sup> God remembered Noah and all the beasts and cattle that were with him in the ark, and God caused a wind to sweep across the earth. The waters began to subside. <sup>2</sup> The fountains of the deep and the sluices in the sky were stopped up, / and the heavy rain from the sky was held back. <sup>3</sup> Little by little the waters receded from the earth. / By the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters had diminished so that <sup>4</sup> in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the Ararat range. <sup>5</sup> The waters went on diminishing until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the peaks of the mountains became visible. /

<sup>6</sup> At the end of forty days Noah opened the hatch of the ark that he had made, <sup>7</sup> and released a raven; it went back and forth waiting for the water to dry off from the earth. <sup>8</sup> Then he sent out a dove, to see if the waters had dwindled from the ground.

<sup>b</sup> LXX, and others, read “and every winged bird.”

<sup>c</sup> See NOTE.

<sup>9</sup> But the dove could not find a place for its foot to rest on, and returned to him in the ark, for there was water all over the earth; so putting out his hand, he picked it up, and drew it inside the ark toward him. <sup>10</sup> He waited another seven days and again released the dove from the ark. <sup>11</sup> The dove returned to him toward evening, and there in its bill was a plucked olive leaf! Noah knew then that the waters had dwindled from the ground. <sup>12</sup> He waited yet another seven days and released the dove; it did not return to him again.

<sup>13</sup> /In the six hundred and first year [of Noah's life],<sup>d</sup> in the first month, on the first day of the first month, the waters had begun to dry from the earth. / Noah removed the covering of the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. /<sup>14</sup> In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

<sup>15</sup> Then God spoke to Noah, saying, <sup>16</sup> "Come out of the ark, together with your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives. <sup>17</sup> Bring out with you every living being that is with you—all flesh, be it bird or cattle or any creature that creeps on earth—and let them swarm on earth, and breed and increase on it." <sup>18</sup> So Noah came out, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives. <sup>19</sup> And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird—everything that stirs on earth—left the ark, group by group. /

<sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh and, choosing from every clean animal and every clean bird, offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup> As Yahweh smelled the soothing odor, he said to himself, "Never again will I doom the world because of man, since the devisings of man's heart are evil from the start; neither will I ever again strike down every living being, as I have done.

<sup>22</sup> So long as the earth endures,  
Seedtime and harvest,  
Cold and heat,  
Summer and winter,  
And day and night  
Shall not cease."

<sup>d</sup>LXX supplies the required text, cf. vii 11.

## NOTES

vi 5. *Yahweh*. A clear sign in this composite account that the passage stems from *J*.

6. *regretted*. The Heb. stem *n̄hm* describes a change of mind or heart, either in an intransitive sense (as here and in 7), or transitive "to comfort."

8. *found favor with*. Literally "won favor (not 'grace') in the eyes of," cf. Akk. *īnam maḥārum* "to receive the eye, attract, please." The Heb. idiom is highly flexible and varies in shading from context to context, as will be apparent from later occurrences; cf. pp. LXVII f.

9–12. A long consecutive passage from *P*. The typical introductory *tōl'dōt* refers to Noah's sons (10). The intervening notice is parenthetical.

9. *in that age*. The traditional rendering "in his generations" is mechanical and obviously unsuitable. It has been proposed to emend the texts *bdrTyw* to *bdrKyw* "in his ways," with allusion to such passages as Deut xxxii 4; Ezek xxviii 15; and Ps cxix 1. The change of a single letter would not be major. Nevertheless, the close parallel in vii 1 (*J*) argues in favor of the received text. The difficulty is largely translational. Heb. *dōr*, in common with its Sem. cognates, signifies "duration, age span"; the meaning "generation" (in the current sense) is secondary. And since the possessive pronoun of Hebrew often corresponds to our definite article or demonstrative pronoun (and vice versa), the present form stands for "in his times, in that age."

10. *Japheth*. It may be of interest that the apparently identical Greek name *Iapetos* is borne by one of the Titans in a context that could be indirectly related to that of vi 1–4; see COMMENT *ad loc*.

11. *in the view of*. The Heb. prepositional term *lipnē* means literally "to the face of." Its normal connotation is either spatial ("in front of") or temporal ("before"). There is, however, still another important meaning which the customary translation "before" can only distort. What is involved in such instances is the attitude of the party concerned, in terms of judgment, will, approval, and the like; cf. vii 1, and see also x 9, xvii 18, xxvii 7 (followed by a temporal *lipnē*), xliii 33. Not infrequently, *lipnē Yahweh* is like our *deo volente*; cf., for example, the four co-ordinate instances in Num xxxii 20 ff. In the present passage the indicated meaning is: according to God's (regretful) conclusion; in vii 1, the equally plain sense is: in my approving view; cf. pp. LXVII f.; cf. the Akk. idiom *pānušūma* "if he chooses."

*lawlessness*. Heb. *ḥāmās* is a technical legal term which should not be automatically reproduced as "violence"; cf. xvi 5.

13. *I have decided*. Literally "it is in front of me."

14. The Babylonian Flood hero Utnapishtim receives his instructions in a dream.

*gopher*. The timber in question has not been identified.

*compartments*. Literally "cells." It is sometimes argued that Heb. *qinnim* should be repointed as *qānim* to yield "reeds," on the mistaken assumption that "reed hut—wall" in the pertinent Gilg. passage (Tablet XI, lines 21 f.) shows the material that was used in the construction of the ark. The sense of that passage, however, is altogether different. The reed hut is the venerated shrine in which the Flood hero received his instructions from the friendly god Ea.

*pitch*. The same substance and the cognate term for it are found in the corresponding cuneiform passage.

15. The stated dimensions (approximately 440×73×44 feet) suggest a vessel of some 43,000 tons; cf. A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 1946, p. 236.

16. *terminating*. For similar technical use of the verb, see Deut xxvi 12. The specific detail remains obscure.

17. *everywhere*. Literally "under the sky."

18. *covenant*. A solemn agreement between two parties providing sanctions in the event of non-compliance.

19. *all else that is alive*. The definite article in Heb. (here in *haḥay*) often contrasts the defined thing with the preceding; cf. xiv 16.

*two of each*. This number is invariable with *P*. *J* specifies seven pairs of all animals that are ritually clean (cf. vii 2) and one pair of those that are unclean.

*stay alive*. Also in vs. 20; not "maintain life." This is another instance of the intransitive Hiphil (cf. iii 6); the causative sense is generally expressed by the Piel (cf. vii 3); cf. p. LXVIII.

21. *food that is to be eaten*. Necessarily, not "food that is eaten, edible," since the inedible kind would not be called food. The Heb. form is capable of either nuance; cf. Lev xi 34.

vii 1. *I found to be truly righteous*. On the force of Heb. *lipnē* cf. NOTE on vi 11.

2-3. Were the aquatic creatures left out because they were immune from the Flood?

6. *in his six hundredth year*. Cf. vs. 11, from the same hand (*P*). The Heb. construction with *ben-* "son of," i.e., "participant in," can be either cardinal or ordinal.

9. [*two of each*]. If this statement came from *J*, it would be at variance with *J*'s figures elsewhere in this account; the words are attributed, therefore, to a later redactor who sought to bring the passage into harmony with *P*. The same would apply to the use of Elohim in this verse rather than Yahweh; but the latter reading is given by Sam., Syr., and Vulg.

(manuscripts). Some of the critics regard all of vss. 8-9 as a later addition.

12. *Heavy rain*. Heb. *gešem*, unlike *māḡār*, signifies abnormal rainfall; cf. also viii 2. The period of forty days is a feature of *J*.

16. *comprised*. Literally "came as." The final clause is from *J* (note "Yahweh"); these words may have stood originally after vs. 10.

17. *forty days*. LXX adds "and forty nights"; the whole phrase, however, was probably carried over from vs. 12.

18. *swelled*. Literally "grew mighty/mightier"; a slightly different nuance ("the crest reaching") is found in vs. 20.

21. *that had stirred*. Here the Heb. verb refers to all life in general, and not merely reptiles; see NOTE on i 28, and cf. viii 17.

22. *the faintest breath of life*. Literally "the breath of the spirit of life."

23. *was blotted out*. The traditional vocalization takes the verb as active. Taken literally, "he blotted out" would leave the pronoun without antecedent. The passive form, however, would be made up of exactly the same consonants (*wymh*). Moreover, Hebrew often employs actives in an impersonal sense (cf. ix 6). Either way, therefore, the translation here given may be safely adopted.

viii 1. *subside*. The pertinent Heb. verb is isolated in this account and rare elsewhere.

4. *the Ararat range*. The terminology ("mountains of Ararat") alludes clearly to range as opposed to a particular peak. For the significance of this location see the COMMENT on Sec. 6.

6. *forty days*. In the original narrative by *J* this was the full length of the Flood; cf. vii 4. In the present sequence, however, the text appears to refer to an interval following the specific date just given in vs. 5 (*P*).

9. *its foot*. Literally "flat part, sole of its foot."

13. The Heb. stem for "to be dry" (*ḥrb*) denotes "to be or to become free of moisture"; complete dryness is signified by *ybš* (14).

17. *on it*. MT repeats "on the earth."

19. LXX has here the preferable reading: "All the beasts, all the cattle, all the birds, and all the creeping things on earth" (cf. vii 21).

21. *doom*. Heb. uses the Piel form of the stem *qll*, which denotes not so much "to curse" as "to belittle, slight, mistreat," and the like.

*from the start*. Literally "from his (i.e., man's) childhood/youth." This is ambiguous because we are not told whether what is involved is the early age of mankind as a whole, or that of each individual. In xlvi 34 the same term is applied by Jacob's sons both to themselves and to their ancestors, which can best be reflected in English by "from the beginning." The same kind of neutral phraseology commends itself in this instance.

## COMMENT

The received biblical account of the Flood is beyond reasonable doubt a composite narrative, reflecting more than one separate source. One of the sources goes back to *P*, and is easy enough to identify except for a clause or two. But the identity of the narrator or narrators other than *P* has caused considerable trouble and debate. Nevertheless, if one is prepared to overlook a few highly technical details—as one must in a comprehensive study—it should not be too hazardous to accept *J* as the only other author involved.

More serious for our immediate purposes is the fact that the respective versions of *P* and *J* have not been handed down in connected form, as was the case, for example, with Sec. 1 (*P*) and Sec. 2 (*J*). Here the two strands have become intertwined, the end result being a skillful and intricate patchwork. Nevertheless—and this is indicative of the great reverence with which the components were handled—the underlying versions, though cut up and rearranged, were not altered in themselves. The upshot is that we are now faced not only with certain duplications (e.g., vi 13–22 : vii 1–5), but also with obvious internal contradictions, particularly in regard to the numbers of the various animals taken into the ark (vi 19–20, vii 14–15 : vii 2–3), and the timetable of the Flood (viii 3–5, 13–14 : vii 4, 10, 12, 17, viii 6, 10, 12).

To show the diverging accounts at a glance is not a simple task. A number of modern treatments resort to the expedient of reshuffling the text, but this does violence, in turn, to a tradition that antedates the LXX translation of twenty-two centuries ago. The arrangement followed here reproduces the exact order of the received (“Masoretic”) text. At the same time, however, everything that can be traced to *P* has been placed between diagonals. This way the two components can be distinguished at a glance, or they may be followed consecutively if one wishes to do so. No attempt, however, has been made to mark in *J* the possible ministrations of *R* (edactor), in the few instances where such “joins” appear to be indicated; minimal remarks on this subject have been included in the NOTES.

That the biblical account as a whole goes back ultimately to Mesopotamian sources is a fact that is freely acknowledged by most modern scholars; see the detailed discussion in Heidel’s *Gilgamesh*

*Epic . . .*, pp. 224–89. But the actual ties are more complex than is generally assumed.

The primeval Flood is echoed in a variety of cuneiform sources; cf. S. N. Kramer, *From the Tablets of Sumer*, 1956, pp. 176 ff. The most extensive prototype, and the best known by far, is found in Tablet XI of the *Gilgamesh Epic*. It is with this celebrated narrative that the biblical account has most in common.

In both instances there is a Flood hero who has been singled out for deliverance from the impending universal catastrophe. Each is told to construct an ark according to detailed specifications. There follow related descriptions of the elemental cataclysm, the annihilation of all life outside the ark, and the eventual grounding of the strange vessel on top of a tall mountain. Both Noah and Utnapishtim, his Babylonian counterpart, release a series of birds at appropriate intervals to test the subsidence of the waters; each account mentions a dove and a raven. Lastly, when dry land has reappeared in the now desolate world, each principal gives expression to his boundless relief through a sacrifice of humble thanksgiving.

So much correspondence in over-all content is inescapable proof of basic interrelationship. There are, however, also significant differences in detail. The biblical Flood, as was noted earlier (see COMMENT on Sec. 7) is given strong moral motivation, whereas the cuneiform version—at least the one that is incorporated in the *Gilgamesh Epic*—fails to suggest a plausible cause; one might ascribe the awesome interlude to mere whims of heaven. There are, furthermore, dissimilarities with respect to the occupants of the two arks (the Mesopotamian personnel includes “all the craftsmen”) and the order of the test flights (raven–swallow–dove in *Gilg.*). Above all, there is the immediately apparent difference in names: Noah as against Utnapishtim; the mountains of Ararat as opposed to Mount Nišir. It is thus clear that Hebrew tradition must have received its material from some intermediate, and evidently northwesterly, source, and that it proceeded to adjust the data to its own needs and concepts.

The ultimate inspiration for the Mesopotamian cycle of Flood narratives can only be a matter of guesswork at this time. Perhaps the best chance of a likely solution lies in the recent disclosures concerning the geological background of Lower Mesopotamia (cf. J. M. Lees and N. L. Falcon, “The Geological History of the Mesopotamian Plains,” *Geographical Journal* 118 [1952], 24–39). It now ap-

pears that not very long ago, as geological ages are reckoned, waters from the Persian Gulf submerged a large coastland area, owing probably to a sudden rise in the sea level. If that rise was precipitated by extraordinary undersea eruptions, the same phenomenon could also have brought on extremely heavy rains, the whole leaving an indelible impression on the survivors. All this, however, must remain in the realm of speculation.