

The Archaeology of the Book of Genesis.

By PROFESSOR A. H. SAYCE, D.D., LL.D., D.LITT., OXFORD.

II.

15. 'Jahweh God took the man.'—Similarly, in the Babylonian story of the Deluge, Utu-napistim states that 'Bel took my hand and led me' to the Paradise 'at the mouth of the rivers' of Edin, where he and his wife were 'made like the gods' (*Epic of Gilgames*, xi. 198–205). The conception of the deity or his representative, the priest, taking the man by his hand and leading him to the image and dwelling-place of the god was peculiarly Babylonian, and we find many representations of it on the early seal-cylinders. The ceremony of 'taking the hand of Bel,' *i.e.* Merodach, and thereby becoming his adopted son, which was needed to legitimize the title of a Babylonian king, is connected with the same idea. Since 'Yahweh-Elohim took the man and led him into the garden,' the creation of Adam would have been in Eden, outside the garden (see v.⁸ and 3²³).

Babylonia was an agricultural country before it became a commercial one, and to the last agriculture formed the basis of the State. But 'the man' was delivered from the hard work of ordinary agriculture by being conducted to the garden or plantation of the deity, where the lighter work of tending the sacred trees and shrubs was assigned to him. As the garden was that of the deity, and the produce of what was grown in it was used in the divine worship, 'the man' was thus engaged in the service of his god, the very reason, in fact, on account of which, according to the Sixth Tablet of the Epic of the Creation, mankind was created. Adam's services were thus owed to Yahweh-Elohim alone; he could not obey the instructions of any other god without breaking the contract into which, in the eyes of the Babylonian, he would have entered, and forfeiting all his rights as the servant of Yahweh. Hence he was required not only to 'cultivate' it, but also to 'watch' and protect it from hostile attack. In the legend which gathered round the early life of Sargon of Akkad, the great king is similarly said to have become the gardener of Istar, and 'in his gardenership' to have been loved by the goddess.

The 'garden' here also was strictly a plantation. It was in a similar plantation (of cedar trees), according to Assur-bani-pal,¹ that Susinak, 'the god of Susa,' had his secret dwelling (*mûsab*) and 'oracle' (*pirîsti*) with its hidden knowledge of good and evil.

16. The Babylonian original of the latter part of the verse was probably *inîb kal etsi ina gani akala takul*.

17. **The Food of Death.**—The threatened death 'on the day' on which the fruit of the tree of knowledge was eaten did not take place (see note on 3⁴). A parallel is to be found in the Babylonian myth of Adamu, who was told by his god Ea that he would be offered 'the food of death' (*akala sa muti*) and 'the waters of death' (*mê muti*), which he was accordingly to refuse, but who was actually offered 'the food of life' (*akal baladhi*) and 'the waters of life' (*mê baladhi*), which he refused in accordance with his lord's command, and so lost the gift of immortality.

The belief in a 'food of death' and a 'food of life' was Babylonian. In the Penitential Psalms the penitent is made to say, 'the cursed thing of my god unknowingly did I eat' (see my Hibbert Lectures on Babylonian Religion, p. 350). But why the fruit of the oracle tree should have been forbidden does not appear at first sight, unless upon the supposition that as a gardener and servant 'the man' was not allowed to obtain the knowledge which only the priest as the representative of the deity was permitted to possess. Ea, the All-wise, at all events, freely communicated his knowledge of spells and incantations to his son Ašari, and through him to mankind, and this knowledge included how to heal the sick and raise the dead to life. On the other hand, the tablets of destiny were the property of Ellil of Nippur, and no one else was allowed to become possessed of them. They had been the spoil of victory torn from the breast of the demon husband of the dragon Tiamât, the possession of which secured the sovereignty of the world to the gods of light,

¹ See *W.A.I.* v. col. v. 129, vi. 30.

and their theft by the god Zû made him an outlaw, pursued and condemned to death by the gods of heaven. Has there been an intentional identification of the fruit of the oracle tree of Ea with the tablets of destiny of Ellil? At the same time it must be remembered that the 'oracle' of the god of Susa in the cedar grove near that city was, according to Assur-bani-pal, tabooed to all but the priests.

18. 'A helpmeet for him' is a curious expression, *èzer* (Ass. *izru*), 'a succour,' being hardly the description of a woman that we should have expected in a Semitic writer. Can the original have had *ezirtu*, 'form,' 'image'? The Babylonian lexicographers confound the two roots *ezeru* (עֲזַר) (with its derivatives *ezirtu*, *uzurtu*, etc.) and *nazaru*, 'to defend' (with its derivatives *izru*, *uzzuru*, etc.). In the Tel el-Amarna tablets the *z* of *nazaru* becomes *z*.

19. That *ezirtu* (or *ezru*) existed in the original of v.¹⁸ seems clear from this verse, which otherwise would have no connexion with what precedes. The 'creation' of Yahweh-Elohim was not the woman, but 'the beasts of the field and the fowl of the heavens,' since the passage reads: 'And Yahweh-Elohim said, It is not good that the man should be alone (Ass. *edissu*); I will make for him *ezir* [like himself]. So out of the ground Yahweh-Elohim formed every beast of the field,' etc. The creation of the woman came afterwards when no 'ezir like himself' had been discovered among the beasts and birds.

The 'ground' is that of the garden, according to v.⁹. Hence 'the beast of the field' means the domesticated animals of Babylonia (who were offered in sacrifice to the gods), like the Babylonian *pul tseri* or *pul Edinna* of which it is a translation.¹ But it included the serpent (3¹), which was naturally to be found in a garden or plantation. The *pul tseri* are also called 'the cattle of the god Ner,' who would thus have been the god of 'the field.' Tiglath-pileser I. speaks of *pul tseri gimirta u ittsur samê*, 'all beasts of the field and fowl of the heavens.'

¹ *Pul tseri* is opposed to *umam tseri*, 'the wild beasts.'

The Heb. נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, *nephesh hayyâh*, 'breath of life' (Ass. *baladh napisti*) comes from v.⁷, and must be a gloss upon the words 'that (was) their name,' which has made its way into the text. That it should precede עֲמוֹתָ is due to the fact that Hebrew is written from right to left, whereas in Assyrian, which is written from the left to right, the gloss is always in the right hand column.

20. 'All cattle' is another gloss explaining 'every beast of the field,' which in Hebrew would have included wild beasts as well as domesticated ones. As in v.¹⁹, the original order would have been 'every beast of the field and every fowl of the heavens.'

21, 22.—Mr. King compares the statement of Merodach in the Epic of the Creation, that 'My blood will I take and bone will I [fashion]; I will make man,' where the Assyrian word for 'bone' is *etstsimtum*, the Heb. *etsem* (*Seven Tablets of Creation*, i. p. 87). In the story of the Descent of Istar into Hades the verb used when it is said that Ea 'made' the androgyne Atsu-sunamir is *ibni*, like יָבַן, *yiben*, here.

As the animals had been 'made to come' by Yahweh-Elohim to 'the man,' so, when it was found that they were *no ezir* like himself, the woman was made to come to him.

23. **Woman.**—This etymological note is of West Semitic origin, since, though *assatu* is 'woman' in Babylonian, *nisu*, and not *isu*, is 'man.' In *W.A.I.* ii. 32. 24, *astu* is given as the West Semitic equivalent of *assatu*.

24. Among the Hebrews and Beduin the woman married into the family of the man, not conversely. Hence in this verse we seem to have a reflexion of early Babylonian feeling which placed the woman more on a footing of equality with the man.

25. Adamu in the Babylonian story of the first man was similarly naked until he received garments from Ea and Anu. The likeness in Hebrew between עָרוֹם, *arûm*, 'naked,' and עָרוֹם, 'wise,' reproduces that in Babylonian between *erum*, 'naked,' *urum*, 'shame,' and *ersum*, 'wise.' In the original there would have been a play upon the words *erum* and *urum*.