

S. R. Driver, The Book of Genesis

Re the Deluge

p. 106f The Hebrew and the Babylonian narratives have evidently a common origin. And the Hebrew narrative must be derived from the Babylonian: for not only is the Babylonian story of the Flood much older than (upon any view of its origin) the Book of Genesis (for, as was shewn above, we have a version of it dating from c. 1980 B.C.), but as Zimmern has remarked, the very essence of the Biblical narrative presupposes a country liable, like Babylonia, to inundations; so that it cannot be doubted that the story was 'indigenous in Babylonia, and transplanted to Palestine.' Of course, the Biblical account was not, any more than the Biblical account of the Creation, transcribed directly from a Babylonian source: but by some channel or other - we can but speculate by what (cf. p. 31) - the Babylonian story found its way into Israel; for many generations it was transmitted orally, so that details were naturally forgotten or modified . . . J and P at different times cast it into a written form, each impressing upon it features characteristic of his own point of view and literary method; and from the combination of the two texts thus formed, the present narrative of Genesis has arisen.

Re the Creation

p. 31 Driver says that the creation story was derived ultimately from a heathen source, and made the vehicle of profound religious teaching. He thinks that the Babylonian legend of Creation must have passed through a long period of naturalization in Israel, and of gradual assimilation to the spirit of Israel's religion, before it could have reached the form in which it is presented to us in the first chapter of Genesis. How, or when, it was first introduced among the Hebrews, must remain matter of conjecture. Its introduction may reach back to the time when the ancestors of the Hebrews lived side by side with the Babylonians in Ur . . . We have in the first chapter of Genesis the Hebrew version of an originally Babylonian legend respecting the beginnings of all things.

Re the Garden of Eden and the Fall

p. 53 . . . though no complete Babylonian parallel to the story of Paradise is at present known, there are features in the narrative which point strongly towards Babylonia, and in the light of the known fact that other elements in the early chapters of Gen. are derived from Babylonia, authorize the inference that echoes of Babylonian beliefs supplied, at least in part, the framework of the representation.