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Recent Biblical Archaeology.

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The Rivers of Paradise.

THE land of Eden, as is now well known, was Babylonia. Edin, 'the plain,' was the name given to the country by the Sumerians, from whom the Semitic Babylonians borrowed it under the form of Edinu. One of the quarters of Sippara was called 'Sipar-Edina, 'Sippara of Eden,' to distinguish it from another quarter which stood on the Kisad, or bank of the Euphrates. Eden was a gift of the rivers which had their sources in the mountains of the north, and whose annual inundation, as in Egypt, brought irrigation and fertility to the alluvial soil. The West Semitic translation of Edin is *sâdeh*, 'field,' though this last is itself borrowed from the Babylonian *sidû*, the technical term for the rich land on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates. The irrigating flood was called *êdê* in Sumerian (usually written *A-dê* + determinative); this was borrowed by Semitic Babylonian under the form of *êdû*, and appears as *êdû* in Gn 2⁶, where we should translate: 'but the inundation rose from the earth and watered all the surface of the soil, *u êdû ina irtsiti itelâ-mma isqi kal pan gaggari* in the Babylonian original; the Hebrew translator has misunderstood the preposition *ina*, which after *elâ*, 'to ascend,' has the double signification of 'in' and 'from.'

The enclosed garden was a distinguishing characteristic of Babylonia, and is represented in the primitive pictographs as of rectangular shape. The Hebrew *gân* is the Babylonian *ganû* (*Cun. Texts*, xii. 17, 37)—sometimes reduced to *ginû*—which is itself borrowed from the Sumerian *gana*. The garden, according to Gn 2⁸, was in the eastern part of Eden—*¤רְפָּה* can hardly be a misinterpretation of the Bab. *qudmi-s*, 'in the first days'—and as the point of view of a West Semitic writer would have been from the western side of the Euphrates, the garden must have been in the direction of the Tigris. Consequently we can have no reference here to the Babylonian story of the first man, *A-da-mu*, who was a native of Eridu, on the western bank of the Euphrates.

The Babylonian garden was always largely stocked with trees, which were grown partly for their shade, partly for their fruit (so Gn 2⁹). In the garden of Genesis the tree of life stood in the centre, the tree of knowledge being in some other part of it, unless the mention of the latter is an afterthought on the part of the writer. In the fragment we possess of the story of Paradise, as told at Eridu, the *kiskanû*, which is identified by Dr. Pinches (following myself, *Hibb. Lect.* p. 238) with the vine, by Professor Hommel with the

palm,¹ is similarly stated to have been 'in the (central) point of the earth.' Perhaps this was natural, since it grew at Eridu, 'the good city,' looking, we are told, like *uknu*, or lapis-lazuli, and planted beside the deep. The deep, the home of the culture-god Ea, was the Persian Gulf, on the shores of which the seaport Eridu stood in the early days of Babylonian history.

At this time the Babylonian plain and the northern coast of the Gulf presented a very different appearance from what they do to-day. Eridu is now more than a hundred miles from the sea, thanks to the annual accumulation of silt brought down by the Tigris and Euphrates, and the old channels of the Tigris and Euphrates themselves can be recognized with difficulty. It would seem, however, that the present Shatt el-Hai was once one of the channels of the Tigris, by which it flowed into the sea at no great distance from the mouth of the Euphrates, a little to the south-west of which Eridu was built. The channel which is mentioned in the great historical inscription of Entemena of Lagas (4000 B.C.) was strictly a canal, but as a current flowed through it the Babylonians regarded it as a river. In course of time marshes formed at the mouths of the rivers, through which their united stream made its way into the Gulf. This united stream was still sufficiently near the Gulf to be salt; it was therefore regarded by the Babylonians as a continuation of the Gulf, or ocean-river, and was accordingly called by them the Nar Marrah', or Salt River.

This is the river which, according to Gn 2¹⁰, 'went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence (*i.e.* from the garden rather than from Eden) it was parted and became four heads.' Two of the 'heads' were those of the Euphrates and Tigris, and they were called 'heads' because the ocean-river which encircled the world was held to be the source of every stream. On early seal-cylinders Ea, the god of the Gulf, is represented as pouring from either side of a vase the two great rivers of the Babylonian plain. Their annual inundation was even ascribed to their being flooded by the waters of the Gulf. Hence, in speaking of 'head,' the Hebrew writer is translating literally from the Babylonian.

¹ See *Grundriss der Geographie und Geschichte des alten Orients*, p. 276, where the latest translation of the fragment is given.

But, besides the Tigris and Euphrates, there were two other rivers. The first was the Pison, which encompassed the whole land of Havilah, where there was good gold, *bēdōlakh* and *shoham* stone. Pison is the Babylonian Pišannu, which Delitzsch inferred to mean 'canal' or 'aqueduct.' Other Assyriologists have proposed 'water-barrel,' but the word really means 'a shadūf,' secondarily 'a shadūf-bucket,' and the ideograph for it goes back to a pictograph which represents a shadūf standing by the side of an irrigation basin. As Professor Delitzsch long ago pointed out, Havilah is Northern Arabia; the Pison, consequently, must be the canal which was known in later days as the Pallakottas, and is the modern Bahr en-hejif Canal which runs westward of the site of Eridu. Professor Hommel has shown that the *bēdōlakh* (Bab. *budulkhu* and *budilkhu*) was a resin, while the *shoham* or '*sa'mtu* stone was a product of Arabia. The word means 'grey-blue' in Babylonian, so it may have been the turquoise of Sinai.

The second river was the Gihon, which encompassed all the land of 'Cush.' There was no Cush near Babylonia; the name should be read Cash, as in Gn 10⁸. The Kassi were the Kossæans of classical geography, who lived in the mountains immediately to the north of Elam, and conquered Babylonia in 1780 B.C., founding there a dynasty which lasted for 576 $\frac{3}{4}$ years. Among the Western Semites, as we learn from the Tel el-Amarna tablets, Babylonia henceforth became known as the land of Kas, while in Assyria northern Babylonia became Kar-Dumyas. The name Cush, *i.e.* Kas, in Gn 2¹³, must therefore belong to the Kassite Age.

Like Kar-Dumyas, Kas will have denoted northern Babylonia, where the Kassites had their capital, as opposed to Sumer, south of the Shatt el-Hai. Hence the Shatt el-Hai must be the Gihon of Genesis. Years ago I expressed the conviction that 'SA-Khan, which is given as a synonym of the Euphrates (*W.A.I.* ii. 35-6), should be read Gikhan, and identified with the Gihon. This conviction has since been verified, 'SA-A being stated in the lexical tablets to have had the phonetic value of *gi* (93042, *Bb.* 28). *Gikhan* meant a 'fishing-net,' and was borrowed by Semitic Babylonian under the form of *gikhinnu*,² which was naturally assimilated by the Hebrew

² Or was the borrowing, on the part of Sumerian, from Semitic Babylonian?

scribes to their own *gikhōn*. That the river was fished with nets may indicate the existence of weirs. It is described in the inscription of Entemena as extending from the Tigris to the Euphrates, to the lower course of which it lent its name. In northern Babylonia the Euphrates was known as the Uruttu, or 'river of Sippara.'

The third river was the Tigris, which ran 'eastward of Assur.' This formed the eastern boundary of Edin, south-east of the Shatt el-Hai. As it is said to flow eastward of Assur, Assur cannot mean Assyria, but must denote the city of Assur, which gave its name to Assyria, and after the rise of the Assyrian kingdom long continued to be the capital of the country. At the same time, had the Assyrian kingdom existed when the geographical position of the Tigris was defined, it is difficult to understand why Assyria rather than Assur should not have been named.

The fourth river was too well known to the writer and his readers to need definition. Hence they must have lived in the West Semitic region, on the western side of the Euphrates, perhaps in Ur. This would explain the order in which the rivers are enumerated, the four rivers forming an oblong, in which to an inhabitant of this region the Nejif Canal would come first, and be followed successively by the Shatt el-Hai, the Tigris, and the Euphrates. The order would be practically (1) South, (2) East, (3) North, and (4) West.

The fragment of the Paradise story of Eridu ends with four lines, of which the following is Professor Hommel's translation :—

In the holy house, which spreads its shadow like a hedge, within which none enters,
Wherein are the gods Samas and Tammur,
Between the mouths of the rivers on both sides,
Have the gods Ka-khegal and Si-tur-gal the [cherubs]
planted this *kishanu* tree.

This same tree is referred to by several of the

early kings of Babylonia: Bur-Sin 'restored the *giskanu* tree of Eridu,' Eri-Aku calls himself 'the restorer of the oracle of the *giskanu* tree of Eridu,' while Sin-idinnam describes it as 'the oracle of the *giskanu* tree of the spirits of earth.' It corresponded, therefore, with the tree of knowledge rather than with the tree of life, of which we have so many monumental representations.

It would appear, therefore, that in the account in Genesis the two trees are combined—the tree of knowledge, which stood at Eridu, 'the good city,' in 'the (central) point of the earth,' and the tree of life, which stood in the centre of the garden. While in Gn 2⁹ it is the tree of life which is planted in the middle of the garden, but in 3³ it is the tree of knowledge (unless, indeed, we have here merely a translation of the Babylonian *ina libbi*, 'within').

Primitive Babylonia believed that Paradise was 'at the mouths of the rivers,' at the very spot, namely, where the Garden of Eden is placed in the Book of Genesis, and it was to this spot that the hero of the Babylonian Flood story was translated. In later times this was combined with another belief, according to which the other world lies beyond the western sunset, the ocean-deep of Ea, in the Persian Gulf, which is also the ocean-river that encircles the world, serving to connect the two. Egyptologists believe that the heaven of Osiris was originally a reedy island in the Delta; if so, the Babylonian paradise in the growing silt at the head of the Persian Gulf would offer to it a curious parallel.

As for the serpent who 'was more subtil than any beast of the field,' he has taken the place of the eaglet in the Babylonian legend of Etana, who is similarly described as the Atar-khasis or 'very clever,' and is made to advise his father, the eagle, not to devour the young of the serpent of night.

The Reading of Scripture in Public Worship.

We publish this month the first selection from the letters which have been sent us by Congregational ministers, dealing with the place and purpose of the reading of Holy Scripture in Public Worship. The alphabetical order of the names

has no significance; it is simply a convenient arrangement. But the letters have been selected out of a very much larger number, because in each of them there is at least one thing mentioned which it is worth the preacher's while to give