

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jtvi-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php)

JOURNAL OF  
THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF  
The Victoria Institute,  
OR,  
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

---

VOL. LIX.



LONDON:  
(Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W.1.)

---

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

---

1927

696TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21st, 1927,

AT 4.30 P.M.

PROFESSOR THEOPHILUS G. PINCHES, LL.D., M.R.A.S.,  
IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed, and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the election of Herbert Michell, Esq., J.P., as an Associate, and the re-election of the Rev. W. L. Baxter, D.D., as a Life Associate.

The CHAIRMAN then introduced Squadron-Leader P. J. Wiseman, R.A.F., to read his paper on "Babylon in the Days of Hammurapi and Nebuchadrezzar," which was illustrated by lantern slides.

---

*BABYLON IN THE DAYS OF HAMMURAPI AND  
NEBUCHADREZZAR.*

By SQUADRON-LEADER P. J. WISEMAN, R.A.F.

**B**ABYLON has cast a greater spell over mankind than any other city. In ancient times it was unquestionably the greatest and most famous. Only two periods of its long history have been selected for comment, and these because of their connection with Old Testament history. Having visited the site on many occasions during recent years, some account is given of the present state of the ruins.

Babylon enjoyed two "golden ages," the first under Hammurapi and the second under Nebuchadrezzar. It was during these two distinctive periods of its history that the Hebrews were in close

contact with the Babylonians. During the first period, the father of the Hebrew nation, Abraham, migrated with his household from Babylonia, in the second Jerusalem was captured and a large proportion of the population transferred to Babylon. It would be difficult to overestimate the effect of these two periods of contact, and it is usually assumed by "higher critics" that it was the dominating religious and cultural influences of Babylon during these periods which stamped and moulded the religious beliefs of Israel. My study of the situation however has led me to a conclusion radically different from this.

The first "golden age" commenced with the succession of Hammurapi to the throne in the year 2067 B.C. It is a coincidence that both he and Nebuchadrezzar reigned for 43 years. He was the outstanding king in a dynasty which began to reign 102 years before. Until recent times this dynasty was regarded as having had its original home in Arabia. It is difficult to follow the theory which endeavours to account for the presence of new peoples in these already civilized lands by assuming that their original home was in the Arabian desert, and that periodically masses of them "erupted" from a nomadic life in this region into cultured and cultivated countries. There seems little real evidence for the theory—yet it has been widely accepted—principally, I am inclined to think, in the endeavour to account for the Hebrew conquest of Palestine without having to give reasons for their presence in the desert before that conquest. Evidence that the climatic conditions in the Arabian desert 4,000 years ago were essentially different from those existing at the present time is wanting. Why then should it be assumed that these primitive peoples, at a time when populations were admittedly scanty even in lands capable of abundant production, made their home in a desert? Does the evidence show that nomadic desert tribes, even if driven to cultivated lands because of the poverty of the desert, accept a ready-made culture and immediately improve upon it?

The ancestors of Hammurapi appear to have migrated from Syria and to have inherited a Summerian culture which was already old, it having then existed for at least 1,000 years. In this matter there is, I think, a decidedly new trend of thought among archaeologists; the later evidence in Mesopotamia goes towards establishing the antiquity of a cultured civilization. As far back as it is possible to push research in this "cradle of mankind" it is found that the civilizations of these early peoples

are of a decidedly developed order. I was much impressed by the work of the expedition at Kish (11 miles east of Babylon) in this respect. The excavations here show the antiquity of the culture which existed in that city 5,000 years ago. The city of Babylon had already a long history when Hammurapi came to the throne. Sargon of Akkad, nearly a millennium before, "took soil from the outer walls of Babylon and consecrated the boundaries of his new capital by tracing its outer walls with the earth of the holy city of Marduk. He made it after the model of Babylon. But according to the chronicle, this was the last act of his reign, and it adds that Marduk was angry because of this sacrilege and destroyed his people with hunger. These two passages contain the first reference to the famous city of Babylon."\* However, Biblical history (Gen. x) takes us further back to the time when Nimrod—probably the Babylonian Merodach or Marduk—founded the city. Under Hammurapi it became the pre-eminent city of the country. Six years after he came to the throne he captured Erech and Isin. He then gave many years to the building of temples for his various gods and in the year 2037 made war on Elam and Larsa. An inscription of the period reads "Hammurapi King of Babylon, summoned his forces and marched against Rim-Sin, King of Ur. He captured the city of Ur and Larsa and he carried off their possessions to Babylon." Chief among the possessions referred to, we learn, were some gods from Ur. As was usual with monarchs of his day he then began to accumulate gods in his city. This is mentioned as Delitzsch asserts that a monotheistic view of God existed in Hammurapi's time. His well-known Code of Laws is sufficient attestation to the developed culture prevalent during his reign. More recent discoveries have confirmed that the laws were not the invention of Hammurapi, but mainly a codification of laws and customs already long existent. Much has been written on the bearing of this code on the Mosaic law, and it has been noted that while many resemblances are obvious, the differences are not less so.

In the recent *Cambridge Ancient History*, Dr. Cook complains† of "the way in which the historical background has been 'washed out' of the narratives in Genesis." Obviously, there is little room for "background" in the first eleven chapters, giving as

\* *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. i, p. 407.

† Vol. i, p. 385.

they do scarcely an outline of the chief events from the beginning of time to the year 2000 B.C. Admittedly these chapters are only a preface to the history of a nation—a history which was to commence with the call of Abraham—but as soon as we pass from this preface we find “historical background.” Gen. xiv furnishes an immediate illustration ; here we have the names of the four kings Abraham met in battle. Their identity with contemporary monarchs, especially that of Amraphel with Hammurapi, is now generally admitted. Much has been written on this subject, so much that I perceive signs of irritation on the part of “higher critics” at the constant reference to it. Dr. Skinner\* maintains rather aggressively “that because these kings have been found to be historical, Abraham is not necessarily so.” This seems like a fight to the last ditch for the now almost vanished theory which regarded Abraham and these kings as mythological heroes. Archæologists would not now write as did H. P. Smith,† “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are personifications of clans and tribes and nothing more,” nor argue as Winckler that Abraham represented a moon-god. The weight of evidence has necessitated the abandonment of such a view. The critics of the narrative have been compelled to remove Abraham’s name from the page of mythology to that of history, and his name is now used historically with as much assurance as that of any of his contemporaries.

Fresh evidence regarding the exact date during which Hammurapi reigned was found in a library at Kish in 1924. I visited this site and was shown the collection of tablets found. Unfortunately, many were in a fragmentary condition. Among them was a piece of a tablet which Professor Langdon informed me would prove of exceptional interest. It was then not cleaned, nor had he time to read it in detail. In October, 1925, in an article in the *Illustrated London News*, of October 10th, under the title “Fixing Abraham’s date and the entire chronology of Babylonia—a Kish tablet—a discovery of great historical importance,” Professor Langdon announced the nature of this “find.” It is an astronomical tablet, and its value is enhanced because it completed the text of tablet K2321 already in the British Museum and in conjunction therewith gives the day and month of the risings and settings of Venus over a period of the

---

\* *Genesis, International Critical Commentary.* Introduction.

† *Old Testament History*, p. 48.

twenty-one years during which Ammizaduga reigned. This Kish tablet, together with British Museum K2321 and K260, gives "the day of the month and the year of the reign in which Venus set in the east and reappeared in the west; when she set in the west and reappeared in the east, with exact figures for her invisibility. Between the eastern setting and the western rising of Venus there is an average period of about 75 days; and between the time of her disappearance as an evening star and her rising as a morning star there is an average period of about seven days. These are called the periods of her invisibility. The Babylonian astronomers of the twentieth century B.C. have here given the exact lengths of the periods of the invisibility of Venus with the monthly dates of all her risings and settings for the entire 21 years of Ammizaduga. A summary of all these dates in their monthly order is then given on the reverse of the Kish and British Museum tablets. By means of astronomical calculations, Dr. Fotheringham, Reader in Ancient Chronology at Oxford, has been able to calculate the exact year B.C. in which these risings and settings occurred. His calculations are almost universally accepted by English and foreign scholars; other attempts by German astronomers to fix the dates of the reign of Ammizaduga have been largely abandoned owing to the discovery of the Kish tablet. By this means we now know that the famous law-giver of Babylon, Hammurapi, probably Amraphel of Gen. xiv, reigned 2067—2025 B.C. Consequently, the date of Abraham is thus apparently settled."

Babylon's second "golden age" commenced with the fall of the Assyrian empire; a fall swift and complete. Notwithstanding the difficulties which began to appear before the close of Ashur-banipal's reign, a period of less than 20 years was to see the dismemberment of the empire. Civil war broke out in Nineveh and the provinces revolted. Meanwhile, Media, now united under a single monarch, Cyaxares, combined with Nabopolassar with the definite intent to end the power of the Assyrian empire. At first they attacked independently, gradually hemming in the Assyrian troops.

In 615 B.C., the Babylonians and Medes united in an attack on the ancient capital of Assyria, Ashur (Kalah Sherghât). This attack was completely successful and modern excavations reveal the ruthlessness with which they sacked and pillaged the city. Affairs at Nineveh were then thrown into disorder. The

Assyrian monarch endeavoured to obtain the aid of the Scythians to fight the Medes while his troops met the Babylonians, but it appears the Scythians saw the almost inevitable trend of events and joined the attacking troops. A combined attack by these forces in the year 612 brought about the fall of Nineveh.

Nebuchadrezzar was in Palestine when he heard the news of his father's death, and as Nabopolassar was not of royal blood or even the son of a noble, he would know that the succession was not altogether secure. He hastily returned to Babylon accompanied only by a bodyguard. The Babylonian priests undoubtedly had much power, but events "had already shown that Nebuchadrezzar was a vigorous and brilliant commander and physically as well as mentally a strong man, fully worthy of succeeding his father. He was to become the greatest man of his time in the Near East, as a soldier, a statesman, and an architect."\* Moreover, the army was unquestionably loyal to him, and this must have been a decided factor in his favour.

For a time Palestine was left alone, but the Kings of Judah could never forget that their country lay as a "buffer" state between Babylon and Egypt. They retained a nominal independence, but were never sure which of the two great powers to rely upon for protection from the other. Egypt certainly received most consideration, probably because it appeared to Judah as a power within easy call; though events proved their promises of assistance were easily broken, while Babylon across the intervening desert seemed too remote. Josiah had lost his life in siding with Assyria (2 Kings xxiii, 29), and Necho immediately reasserted Egypt's suzerainty over Judah, demanding a heavy tribute and placing Jehoiakim on the throne as his vassal. After the decisive defeat of Necho at Carchemish, four years later, Jehoiakim became subject to Babylon. He soon revolted and during the reign of his successor Jehoiachin, Nebuchadrezzar besieged Jerusalem, "and he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes and all the mighty men of valour even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths; none remained save the poorest sort of people of the land" (2 Kings xxiv, 14). Hence a large proportion of the people found themselves in Babylon.

We must now turn to the events at Babylon. Nebuchadrezzar we have seen was a great soldier and statesman, but it was as

---

\* *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. iii, p. 212.

a military architect that he was to excel. It is his work in this respect which spread far and wide the fame of Babylon. It is the city as extended and "made glorious" by him which is told in the pages of Herodotus. Apart from the fame which would accrue to him from the rebuilding of the city on a gigantic scale, there is reason to believe that it was also a policy on his part to conciliate the priests. The Procession Way, the Ishtar Gate, the Temple of Marduk-Esagila, the tower of Babylon-E-temen-ana-ki, have a religious purpose. As a little boy his father had instructed him in the piety of religious building by making him carry bricks for the E-temen-ana-ki. But in such works as the Procession Way and the Ishtar Gate, though built for religious purposes, the scheme is carried out with an eye to possible invasion. Nineveh had fallen and the power of Assyria ended, but his father's old ally in the accomplishment of this, Cyaxares, was gradually consolidating his power, and it must have become obvious to him that ultimately he would have to meet this power in a life-and-death struggle. It is this political consideration I think which, as he often informs us in his inscriptions, caused him to complete some of his fortification works in an almost incredibly short space of time. To meet this dread contingency he planned a series of defence works to surround Babylon, the magnitude of which had never before been attempted. But his work, as can be seen to this day, has not merely a religious and military purpose; he combined to some extent an artistic purpose. When it is remembered that Nebuchadrezzar had nothing except the common clay of the surrounding Babylonian plain, it is astounding how by moulding figures which should stand out in relief upon the walls and by glazing the brick in quite artistic colourings he at least rid the crude brick of its unsightliness if he failed to make it a thing of beauty.

The most impressive feature of the ruined city is the vastness and massiveness of its brickwork. The grandeur of this brickwork has quite departed, largely owing to the brick robbers who have stripped the buildings and roads of their coloured glazed bricks which were uppermost. But the grandeur of the scale still remains. Such artistic triumphs as the hanging gardens, then one of the Seven Wonders of the World, now require much patience, even in tracing their foundations, and repeated visits to the ruins recalled to mind the vivid language of the prophet: "Babylon the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees'

excellency shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah " (Isa. xiii, 19).

Although Rich, Layard and Rassam spent some time digging into these huge mounds, obtaining numerous tablets, it was not until March, 1899, that systematic excavation was commenced. The German Oriental Society planned many years' work, hoping to achieve the complete excavation of the site. From 200 to 300 workmen were employed summer and winter until the outbreak of the Great War—and it is evident from the state of Koldewey's rooms that he left in a great hurry. Some idea of the magnitude of the task involved will be understood when it is realized that the mounds above the ruins were nearly 80 ft. high, compared with the 8 ft. to 10 ft. usually found on the sites of other ancient cities of Mesopotamia. The walls of other cities were 10 ft. to 20 ft. thick. One of the walls in Babylon is 87 ft. wide. Moreover, the extent of the mounds surpassed anything before attempted. Excavation has not recommenced since the war and more than one-half of the city remains unexcavated.

Much uncertainty exists as to the exact size of Babylon. From Herodotus's description it had a perimeter of 56 miles. He states: " Assyria possesses a vast number of great cities, whereof the most renowned and strongest at this time was Babylon, whither, after the fall of Nineveh, the seat of government had been removed. The following is a description of the place:—The city stands on a broad plain and is an exact square, 120 furlongs in length each way, so that the entire circuit is 480 furlongs. While such is its size, in magnificence there is no other city that approaches to it. It is surrounded, in the first place, by a broad and deep moat, full of water, behind which rises a wall 50 royal cubits in width and 200 in height."

Ctesias states that its perimeter was 40 miles, Koldewey expresses the opinion that it was only 11 miles. It is admitted, however, that little has been done to excavate the fortification walls; Koldewey traced  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles of the wall, which can still be seen. He thought this to be the Imgur-bel wall of Nebuchadnezzar, though he states that, as this wall must necessarily have reached to the Euphrates and have enclosed the principal mounds, its length would amount to at least 11 miles.

An inner wall can be seen running immediately east of the mounds of Homera; of this wall only a little over a mile can be traced. It is in the usual form of a double wall, the eastern

part being  $12\frac{1}{4}$  ft. and the western  $21\frac{1}{4}$  ft. wide, and the space of  $23\frac{3}{4}$  ft. between is filled in—making a wall of 57 ft. wide. It is very important to observe, however, that this wall was constructed of crude mud brick.

Herodotus writes as an eye-witness, having visited Babylon, and his description is generally accurate, especially in his statement of the thickness of the wall, which has by excavation been proved true.

Moreover, Ctesias was physician to Artaxerxes, who lived for some time in Babylon, leaving a monument of his residence in the citadel. There is also Nebuchadrezzar's inscription that Nabopolassar built "a great wall which he had made with mortar and burnt brick like a mountain that cannot be moved." Now, the wall suggested by Koldewey as Nebuchadrezzar's inner city wall is built of crude mud brick, not of burnt brick, and no trace has been found of any other inner wall of burnt brick which would answer the description of the inscription. Moreover, the walls found by Koldewey have no strategic point of beginning or ending, yet Nebuchadrezzar states he surrounded Babylon with two walls. Large portions of these enormous inner walls have disappeared. We know that for centuries the site has been a favourite one for brick plunderers. Even in Parthian and Roman days Babylon bricks were used in the construction of their new cities. In the adjacent town of Hilla, and also in Baghdad, I have seen many of Nebuchadrezzar's bricks in the walls of the houses. Many were used in the construction of the Hindeyeh barrage. Everywhere in the mounds deep trenches can be seen where the brick-work has been dug away to a great depth. In these circumstances is it natural to suppose that the Arab, never over-fond of work, would pass by Nebuchadrezzar's outer walls and journey miles into the centre of the city to obtain bricks while the material nearer at hand lasted?

My own view is that the wall which Koldewey thinks to be the *Imgur-Bel* wall is not the outer but the inner wall of Babylon, and that further excavations would yet trace these outer walls and probably find them to be in accord with Nebuchadrezzar's inscriptions. The abandoned canal system surrounding the city is rather confusing when observing from the air, but I think a series of mounds can be traced which answers the description given by Nebuchadrezzar.

The wall referred to, of which  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles has been traced, is a double wall, with a 39-ft. space between filled in with rubble.

The inner wall is 23 ft., the outer wall 25 ft. wide, thus making 87 ft. in all. These figures have been verified at several sections of the ruin. Such walls were undoubtedly built for the two-fold purpose of withstanding enemy attack and flood. In our military cantonment outside Baghdad, built in recent years, the same two reasons necessitated a "bund" of earth surrounding it, and during my appointment there a flooding of the rivers Tigris and Diyala tested this earthwork severely. Nebuchadrezzar's wall had also a military purpose, to render easy the rapid movement of his forces to any point most open to attack, hence its width, and the ability of the chariots to which Herodotus refers, being able to pass each other on top. The wall was not merely for spectacular purposes. Astride these walls 15 towers were found, each 170 ft. apart. Jeremiah refers to these fortifications: "though Babylon should mount up to heaven and though she should fortify the height of her strength" and "the broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken" (Jer. li, 53, 58).

Nebuchadrezzar raised the level of, and rebuilt the Procession Road for, Marduk, the patron-god of Babylon, to whose temple—Esagila—it leads, and along which Marduk was carried on the greatest Babylonian festival—that of the New Year. The road is broad, slopes towards the citadel, and was paved with limestone slabs 3 ft. 6 in. square. The edge of each bore the inscription "Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon, son of Nabopolassar, King of Babylon, am I. The Babel Street I paved with blocks of limestone for the procession of the great god Marduk." Only one of these is still in position, and over this Nebuchadrezzar and Daniel must often have passed.

It would appear that the walls of this road reached a great height. The ruins show them to have been 23 ft. thick and to have been faced with blue enamelled bricks. Into these walls were inserted figures in relief of lions, mostly in white enamel, with yellow manes. Each of these lions was 6 ft. 6 ins. long, and from the large quantities of fragments picked up in the immediate vicinity, it is believed that there must have been one hundred and twenty figures.

This procession road, surmounted as it was by towers, which in case of need were manned by soldiers, and having these lions standing out from the walls in relief so arranged in rows that on either right or left-hand side of the road they were in the attitude of advancing, must have been indescribably terrorizing to the enemy and awe inspiring to the visitor.

It was on the great occasion when this road was used that the so-called Epic of Creation (which should more accurately be described as the Epic of Marduk—as it is essentially a series of laudatory poems to the glorification of Marduk) was recited by his priests as the procession moved along towards his temple. In 1923, Professor Langdon published “The Babylonian Epic of Creation restored from the recently recovered tablets of Assur,” in which he pointed out that these were based upon the Babylonian copy of the Epic, but he says “the scribes of Assur have deliberately suppressed the name of the Babylonian god Marduk substituting Ashur,” and further, that “all copies were ultimately derived from the library of Esagila, the Temple of Marduk at Babylon.” By the publication by Dr. Erech Ebling of the contents of the Ashur tablets, the whole of the Epic is now almost entirely known. It is now admitted that the resemblance between the seven tablets of the Epic and the seven days of Gen. i does not in reality exist. We also know\* that “the Epic originally contained six books and the seventh book existed as an independent poem.” Creation in the Biblical sense scarcely finds a place in the poem, and its morality leaves much to be desired. The Biblical account owes nothing to the Babylonian.

The Ishtar gate, another of Nebuchadrezzar’s schemes of defence and embellishment, is still 40 ft. high, and is the most considerable and striking ruin in Babylonia, and excepting Birs Nimrud, is the highest, yet the 40 ft. standing is believed to be only one-third of the original height and the foundations have not been reached. It is a gateway with three entrances, with recesses, the walls of which are covered with alternate rows of bulls and dragons standing out in relief; these are never mixed in the same horizontal row. When the excavators commenced work in 1899, an upper row of this gateway, made of enamelled bricks of brilliant colourings and design, was still standing. It is no longer to be seen on the site.

The principal audience chamber of the Babylonian Kings is the largest chamber discovered in Babylon. It is 170 ft. long and 55 ft. broad. Koldewey says: “To the south lies the largest chamber of the citadel—the throne room of the Babylonian Kings. It is so clearly marked out for this purpose that no reasonable doubt can be felt as to its having been used as their principal audience chamber. If anyone should desire

---

\* *Babylonian Epic of Creation*, p. 6.

to localize the scene of Belshazzar's eventful banquet, he can surely place it with complete accuracy in this immense room."\*

In connection with Nebuchadrezzar's work of rebuilding, I may mention that on the occasion of my visit to Ur of the Chaldees early in 1924, Mr. C. L. Woolley, head of the joint expedition, working for the Trustees of the British Museum and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, now excavating the site, explained one of the main results of the winter's work just completed—the clearing of the Temple of E-nun-mah, dedicated to the moon god Nannar and his consort. The winter's work had been almost wholly concentrated on the sacred enclosure. Within this enclosure is a Ziggurat, built by Ur-Engur, the first king of the third dynasty. It cannot, therefore, be doubted that Abraham saw this building, and probably witnessed its ritual. The excavations of E-nun-mah revealed that until the time of Nebuchadrezzar the temple had often been rebuilt, but on the original foundations; these foundations go back to the third millennium B.C. The temple consisted of five chambers, and their size indicated that they accommodated the priests only and not the general public. This is characteristic of the old method of worship, where the temple is the house of the god—where he sleeps and eats—the priests being his servants, the god only revealing himself to the public on special occasions when he was taken on procession about the city. Mr. Woolley showed that originally the rooms and fitments were duplicated, indicating a separate ritual for the moon god and his consort, and here it may be said that the worship of this god was, as at Babylon, associated with immorality.

When Nebuchadrezzar came to the throne he rebuilt this temple at Ur, taking care not to destroy the older foundations. He erected a raised platform where the original entrance to the sanctuary stood and demolished surrounding buildings so as to make an extensive open space. It would seem that by these changes Nebuchadrezzar radically altered in many respects the method of worship—substituting open worship by the masses instead of the secret rites of worship conducted within these small chambers by the few. Is there an indication here of a revolutionary religious development inaugurated by

---

\* *Excavations of Babylon*, p. 103.

Nebuchadrezzar of which we have reference in the third chapter of Daniel? There could have been no novelty in Nebuchadrezzar constructing a huge image of gold—there were several of them already in existence; the novelty appears to have been the directions given for the gathering of all officials of the State to its dedication, not in a temple, but on the open plain of Dura, and here it would seem that the three Jewish nobles were, for the first time, ordered to worship with others, and openly, among the mass before the image Nebuchadrezzar had set up.

The type of building in use as far back as Hammurapi's reign shows the climatic conditions in Babylon not to have been materially different to those now existing. Yet many mistakes are made in this matter. I would refer, for instance, to the explanation given to account for the records of the Babylonian Deluge as being merely a nature myth. Jastrow writes\*: "Recognizing unreservedly the common origin of the Babylonian Biblical traditions of the Deluge—as a nature myth picturing the annual change, and based perhaps on a recollection of some particularly disastrous season," and Dr. Driver, quoting Professor Zimmern, "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 in Palestine." The same "nature-myth" explanation is given in endeavouring to account for the Creation tablets. Dr. Driver, relying upon Professors Jastrow and Zimmern, writes: "During the long winter, the Babylonian plain, flooded by heavy rains, looked like a sea (Babylonian *tiamtu*, *tiâmat*). Then comes the spring, when the clouds and water vanish and dry land and vegetation appear. So, thought the Babylonian, must it have been in the first spring, at the first New Year, when, after a fight between *Marduk* and *Tiâmat*, the organized world came into being."†

Similar explanations to account both for the Biblical and Babylonian accounts of Creation and flood are made by many scholars. These so-called explanations are based upon the climatic conditions in which the scholars themselves lived, and not on those of Babylonia. Anyone with an intimate knowledge of Mesopotamia would not have made such blunders.

I take Dr. Driver's statement in detail. "During the long

---

\* *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*, p. 364.

† *Genesis*, 12th edition, 1926, p. 28.

winter." Babylonia has not a long, but a very short winter and a very long summer. The official statistics, taken over a long period, show that the mean daily temperature at Babylon did not fall below that of January, 57·2, and the mean daily temperature of the months of March and November exceeded 75. "The Babylonian plain flooded by heavy rains." Official meteorological figures show that the rainfall at Babylon is 4·25 ins. per annum. It rains on only a few days in the year, the highest monthly rainfall (in March) of 1·09 ins. could not cause a flood.

"Then comes the spring, when the clouds and water vanish and dry land and vegetation appears." It is in the Mesopotamian spring that clouds are most evident and the highest monthly rainfall already quoted falls. However, in spite of these blunders, parts of Mesopotamia do sometimes "look like a sea." This is due, not to rainfall in Mesopotamia, but to the melting of snow in the mountains of Armenia, Kurdistan and Persia. To this day, the river floods feed the permanent swamps in the southern part of Iraq, notably those between Amara and Kurna. The Tigris is at its lowest in October and November—it is not until April that its great volume of water flows. So that every part of Driver's climatic description is inaccurate. It fails to support the nature-myth theory of origin.

The "barrack square" scientific method of making soldiers act alike and with precision has advantages in military training, but should not be adopted by investigators. Higher critics seem to have drawn themselves up so as to form an undeviating line. To consult some of their works is to be impressed with the way they refer to another of their own school of thought and immediately "toe the line" already taken. This is seen in the instance just quoted. The reiteration of "complete agreement among scholars," unless this agreement is due to independent thought, is of no value. The aggressiveness with which we are asked to commence with "assured results" and to accept such assurances as "This latter hypothesis" [the general critical theory of late date and Babylonian borrowings] "with the reconstruction which it involves of our view of the development of Israel's religion *after* 750 B.C., may now be regarded as proved right up to the hilt for any thinking and unprejudiced man who is capable of estimating the character and value of evidence"\* is unscientific.

---

\* Dr. C. F. Burney, *Journal of Theological Studies*, April, 1908, p. 321.

We are indebted to archæologists for providing abundant material, illuminating contemporary conditions of life and belief among the nations surrounding Palestine. The limits of this paper do not permit any detailed examination of Babylon's influence on Israel, but Professor Sayce's statement, made in 1908, that "the more strictly archæological evidence of Babylonian influence upon Canaan is extraordinary scanty"\* still holds good. The evidence of the Old Testament is that during these periods of contact, instead of the Babylonian religious beliefs permeating those of the Hebrews, vastly different events occurred. In the first period, Abram withdrew from Babylonian polytheism, migrating into Palestine. In the second, the effect was such that the constant tendency of the Hebrew people to lapse into idolatry was cured by their residence in Babylon. They had come into direct contact with Babylonian polytheism in all its degrading immorality and wickedness, so that on their return to Jerusalem they thereafter were unaffected as a nation by idolatry. This adherence to their faith is in accord with what their later history would lead us to expect. Greek or Roman domination failed to move them from their monotheistic faith.

It has been suggested that the name "Yahum" or "Yahweh" has been found in Babylonian contract tablets of the age of Abraham, but such similarities in names do not prove that Babylonian beliefs resemble those of the Hebrews any more than a mud hut resembles a palace. How much would we know of God, His nature and attributes, if our knowledge were confined to Babylonian tablets?

#### THE CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS.

Ladies and Gentlemen: It is needless to say that I think we have listened to a very interesting paper, altogether unlike any that we have heard before. Such a communication as this, by one who has been on the spot and visited the ruins, gives an idea of the country and the conditions prevailing there such as other sources of information rarely contain. From the pictures which have been shown we get a very real idea of the confused heaps of ruin-mounds which the explorers have to investigate and the difficulties by which they are faced. Squadron-Leader Wiseman's knowledge of the literature

---

\* *Archæology and Cuneiform Inscriptions*, p. 151.

is exceedingly extensive. In my opinion he is quite right in identifying Merodach with Nimrod. From the time of Hammurabi to the fall of the Babylonian Empire, Merodach was the god of its great capital, the magnitude of which classical authorities have handed down to us. Professor Fried. Delitzsch, however, has stated that the portion of the city of Babylon within the walls now standing is no larger than the extent of Munich or Dresden. It is to this part that the explorers have given their attention, and what there may be outside the walls of this older portion we can only guess. It is a great pity that the Tower of Babel is now only represented by its core of unbaked brick, but such work of destruction in Babylonia has been going on for many years. I am glad to say that it is unlikely that it will be allowed to continue.

But it is getting late, and I will not detain you longer. I would ask you, however, before you leave, to pass a most hearty vote of thanks to Squadron-Leader Wiseman for his most interesting and valuable paper.