

A NEW DELUGE FRAGMENT.

EDITORIAL COMMENT.

AMONG other results of interest Professor H. V. Hilprecht has brought to light from Tablet Hill in Nippur a small fragment of the earliest version of the deluge story, and this discovery is the more important as it agrees much closer with the Biblical report than the other versions of a later date. It proves that the Jews did not become acquainted with the deluge in Babylon during the exile, but that their acquaintance with this tradition must date back to the times of Abraham, constituting part of their earliest literature. The fragment discovered at Nippur reads in Professor Hilprecht's translation as follows:

1. "thee,
2. . . . "[the confines of heaven and earth] I will loosen,
3. . . . "[a deluge I will make, and] it shall sweep away all men together;
4. . . . "[but thou seek l]ife before the deluge cometh forth:
5. . . . "[For over all living beings], as many as there are, I will bring overthrow, destruction, annihilation.
6. . . . "Build a great ship and
7. . . . "total height shall be its structure.
8. . . . "it shall be a house-boat carrying what has been saved of life.
9. . . . "with a strong deck cover it.
10. . . . "[The ship] which thou shalt make,
11. . . . "[into it br]ing the beasts of the field, the birds of heaven,
12. . . . "[and the creeping things, two of everything] instead of a number,
13. . . . "and the family . . .
14. . . . "and" . . .

The fragment can be pretty accurately dated. It was written under the first dynasty of Isin about 2000 B. C., and is about 1500 years earlier than the two Nineveh versions. It is perhaps the oldest version of the deluge story in a Semitic translation, and there is no doubt that the original was much older, for the translation was made from a Sumerian original.

For every line of this new deluge fragment, with the exception of the first and last lines, Professor Hilprecht adds a passage of the Biblical version in Gen. vii. 11 and vi. 13-20, as follows:¹

2. "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened."
3. . . . "behold, I will destroy them with the earth."
4. . . . "but with thee I will establish my covenant."
5. "and behold I do bring the deluge upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on earth shall perish."
6. "make thee an ark . . ."
7. "and thus thou shalt make it . . . and thirty cubits its height."
8. "A roof shalt thou make to the ark, in its entire length thou shalt cover it; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; (with) lower, second and third stories shalt thou make it."
10. "And from every living thing, from all flesh, two from every-thing shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female,
11. "(two) from the birds instead of a number thereof; (two) from the beasts instead of a number thereof; (two) from everything creeping on the ground instead of a number thereof;
13. "and thou shalt come into the ark, thou and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee."

This new fragment throws light also upon the deluge report current in Hierapolis, the center of Istar worship in Syria described by Lucian in his interesting article "On the Syrian Goddess." There he speaks of Deucalion, the pious man who on account of his goodness had been saved from the deluge in a great ark. "He had packed therein the women and children of his family, and when he was ready to board, the animals came two by two, pigs and horses and all kinds of wild creatures and creeping things, in a word all the animals which live upon earth. He took them in, and Jupiter

¹The figures in front of the Biblical quotation refer to the lines of the Nippur version.

endowed them with such peaceful sentiments that they did no harm one to another, but lived in the greatest harmony."

We will further mention that there is a coin of a non-Jewish



city, Kibotos, where the story goes that Deucalion's ark had landed for the name of the city means "ark" in Greek, and here the man who is saved from the Deluge is called by the Biblical name "Noe."