

# The Bible in the light of the Ancient Near East

## Unit 1. Introduction

Pre-modern exegetes viewed Bible as a sacred book, delivered by God.

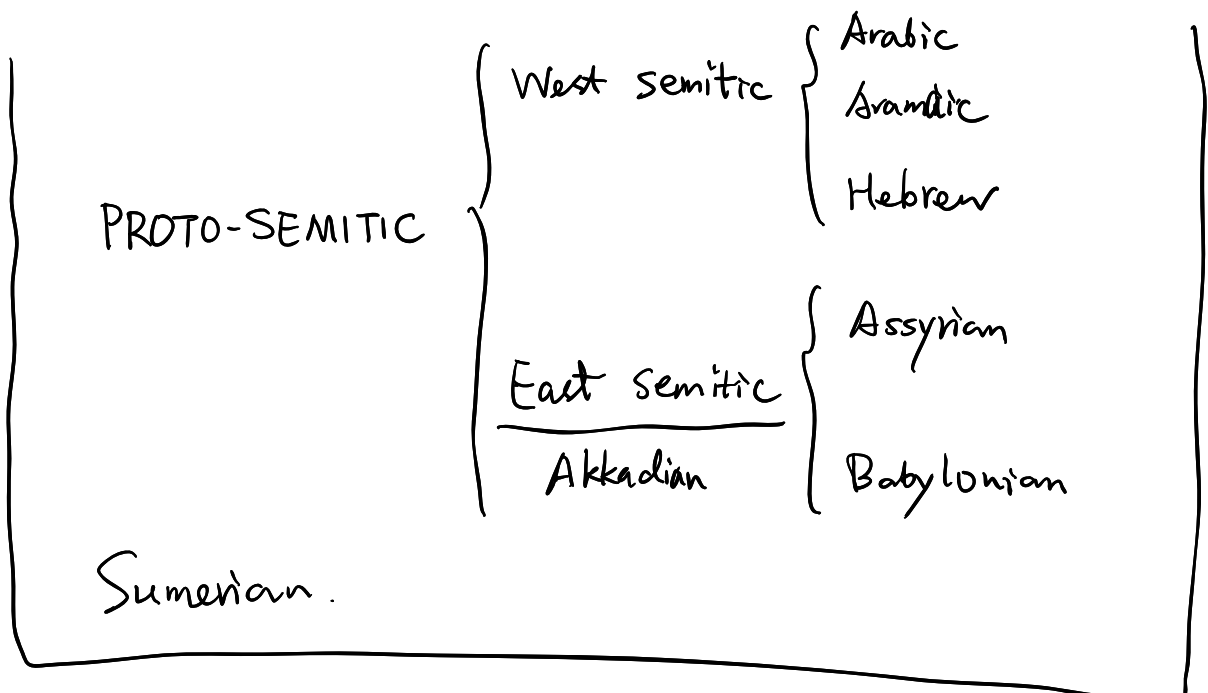
As it turned out with the development of modern archaeology, the Bible is far from being an isolated creation.

'Mesopotamia' is of Greek origin, literally, it means 'between the rivers', i.e. between the Euphrates & Tigris. In antiquity, this region was inhabited by speakers of languages known as Sumerian and Akkadian. They are both written in cuneiform script. (楔形文字). However, in linguistically, they are very different.

The Sumerian is an isolated language as well as the oldest written language. Akkadian, on the other hand, was part of the family of (East) Semitic language. This means that the Akkadian is a relative of various Semitic languages such as Hebrew, Aramaic & Arabic. Akkadian has two main dialects:

Akkadian { Assyrian dialect : city of Assur in Northern  
Babylonian dialect : city of Babylon in South

We have the following picture of whole languages in the Ancient Near East.



Speakers of Assyrian & Babylonian dialects established the famous empires of Assyria & Babylon respectively.

### § The early Periods

- 3200 BCE: first written texts — Sumerian Language.
- The text document financial transactions.

- 2800-2350 BCE: (Early Dynastic Period): { economics texts

简注: 公元前2800-2350, 当时的文体有经济文本及文学文本. 其中文学文本中有智慧书 (Shuruppak) 以及皇家铭文.

这时期的书写工具也有很大的进步, 文士们开始使用三角尖锐的芦苇笔. 书写的文本不再图形化, 而有点像楔子, 故称为楔形文字.

这之后, 这种文字书写系统从美索不达米亚平原南部传播到北部和叙利亚.

## § The Akkadian Empire & Ur III Empire (2234-2004 BCE)

Akkadian Empire

(Northern Mesop.)

(24<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>th</sup> BCE)

Founder: King Sargon: Sargon the Great.

Capital: Akkad, northern Mesop.

中央集权, 军队, 度量衡, 年号  
这比之前的美索不达米亚地区均书写苏美尔文, 从阿卡德  
开始使用阿卡德文作为官方文字.

全盛时期的阿卡德帝国统治 Mesop 全境.

kings of 'the four corners of earth'.

Sumerian Kingdom

(Southern Mesop.)

(21<sup>st</sup> BC)

Ur3

更复杂的官僚机构!

Destruction: King Sharrak-i-sharri: (King of all kings)

40 years after the fall of Akkadian Empire

Ur3: The Kingdom of the Third-Dynasty of Ur

Founder: King Ur-Nammu (King of Sumer & Akkad)

Formal language: Sumerian.

在这段时期, 有大量的记录帝国生活的文本保存下来.  
(10K 的文本)

书写员的学校也建立起来. (School of Scribes)

新体裁: ① Royal hymns (皇家赞美诗)

② civil & criminal Law (民法. 刑法) (Ur-Nammu)

大兴土木:

Ziggurat

city of Ur

通灵塔.

Tower of Babel?

Destruction (2004 BCE): Attacked by

① Kingdom of Elam

② nomadic tribes of Amorite origin.  
(亚摩利) 原始部落)

③

## § Old Babylonian Period & Old Assyrian Period. (2000-1600 BCE)

Akkadian Language. { North: Assyrian: dialect of Akkadian.  
South: Babylonian: dialect of Akkadian

Sumerian was no longer a spoken language, only preserved as a literary language.

政治上, 权力开始下放, 不在完全的中央集权. (诸侯混战)  
(Decentralization of the ruling authority)

此时开始在美索不达米亚有 Amorites (亚摩利) 人, 及其文化. (游牧)  
此时, Amorites 最大的城邦是 Mari 在 Euphrates 河畔. 在这里  
还出土了一个宫殿. 此时的 Mari 有先进文化.

Old Babylonian { Mari: Amorites  
Isin: lens of king Lipit Ishtar (1934-1924 BCE)  
Larsa  
Babylon: Hammurabi 1763 BCE 统一 Larsa, Eshnunna, Assyria, Mari  
to Babylon.  
(Lawcode)  
Eshnunna

Old Assyrian { Assur: Dominant City in the northern. 贸易昌盛的城邦.  
International trade with Anatolia (present place)  
Banking System.  
...

汉莫拉比死后, 巴比伦帝国迅速衰亡. 1595 BC Hittite 赫梯 King Mursili I

§. The Kassite Period in Babylon & the Middle Assyrian Period in Assyria.  
赫梯人在占领巴比伦之后不久就被驱逐了, 留下了混乱的土地...

Kassites 对于他们的记载很少, 他们快速适应 融入了  
(Southern Mesop) 巴比伦社会, 使用巴比伦人的 Akkadian 文字.

(1595-1155 BC) Capital: Babylon.

当时, 抄写员们 传递了 抄写苏美尔文本. 苏美尔语  
告别历史舞台.

Apoem (Ludlul bel nemeqi) 吾将受痛苦 (I will praise the lord of wisdom)

§  
book of Job in Bible

Middle Assyrian Kingdom Capital: Assur.  
(Northern Mesop). Middle Assyrian Laws.  
皇家铭文开始增加大量的“功绩”年度报告.  
亚述年鉴 (Assyrian Annals)

§. Assyrian Empire (934-610 BCE) 亚述帝国.

统一了新月沃土和一部埃及.

当时, 以色列 和 美索不达米亚有了历史连接.

King Shalmaneser III (859-824 BCE) 在他的铭文中明确提到  
两个以色列国王: King Ahab & King Jehu. (the black obelisk 黑石碑)

Tiglath-Pileser II (744-727 BCE) 占领了大量以色列区域. 他接受了  
犹太国王 Ahaz 的投降.

Shalmaneser V (727-722 BCE) 对以色列进行了最后的围困.

⑤

Sargon II (722-705 BCE) 完成了统一过程, 摧毁王国驱逐其居民.

Sennacherib (705-681 BCE). 著名犹太运动, Jerusalem 留存他 Lachish (701 BCE) 被摧毁

上述两位亚述国王有着这些与以色列之间的故事.

King Ashurbanipal 建立了大量图书馆在 Nineveh. 30K tablets.  
黄金时代 (文化)

Following Ashurbanipal's death (Around 639-620 BCE), Assyria began to decline. The causes not clear, but <sup>so</sup> swift by BCE 605 was ruled by a rival By Babylonian dynasty lay in Southern Mesop.

## § Babylonian Empire

Babylonian Empire 的历史文档较少, 他们只用皇家铭文记录建设不是军事行动.

Babylonian Chronicles (巴比伦编年史).

King Nabopolassar (End of 7th BCE). 可能是一位将军而不是皇室成员, 他攻占了北部的亚述中心城市.

继承者: Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BCE) 在 Carchemish 战役获胜后 (BCE 605) 巩固了统治地位, 大兴土木, 建造了神庙及通天塔。  
(犹太与耶路撒冷的毁灭.)

last king Nabonidus (556-539 BCE). 被波斯帝国的 Cyrus the Great 在 539 BCE 击败.

⑥.



## § Creating the Reminder of the World.

★ Similarities: creation of the heavenly lights & their role in determining the calendar.

↓  
After the creation of lights, the precipitation, and the mountains.  
降水

↓  
Crowned king of the world

↓  
create a man.

Similarities Basic conceptions.

1. At the beginning of creation, the world consisted nearly only of water.
2. These waters are called tēhôm (Hebrew) and Tiāmat (Akkadian). Maybe two versions of the same ancient word.
3. One of first actions of creation was the division of the vast body of water into two parts, to serve as the heavens above and the ground water and/or sea water below.
4. Placed an impermeable sheet beneath the upper water to prevent water from leaking down and to preserve the separation of waters.
5. Later, the god created the luminaries (太阳月亮), and determined calendar.
6. The last creature to be added to creation was the human being.

Conclusion. Genesis I does not seem to borrow its content from Enuma Elish.

They probably have a common tradition.



## § Enuma Elish & Genesis 1 Differences

Umberto Cassuto: comparative study can reveal the unique ideas of biblical religion.

① The most striking difference regards the nature of the gods.

★ In contrast, biblical God stands above nature and has no history or genealogy.

★ No other divine entities in the world.

★ splitting monster vs. a neutral, inanimate element (simply water).  
Sea has no independent power to rebel against him.

This process of removing mythological qualities for religious purpose is sometimes called demythologization.

## § The Great Sea Monsters

在圣经中神创造的动物都是温和的，只有一个有明确称谓 tanninim (refers to a dangerous reptile, usually some types of snake.)

根据 Enuma Elish, Tiamat fought against Marduk, she was assisted by an army of mythological sea creatures. Enuma Elish 没有直接指明，但是其它文献称 tannin as a sea monster who took part in a great battle against the god.

## § Biblical Hints about God's Battle with the Sea

Isiah 书: God defeated two creatures: Rahab & tannin. (Only hint)

Job: God defeated Rahab & their helps.

Psalms (诗篇): God's battle with the sea and its helpers.

Rahab, Tannin, Liryatain → Demythologization.  
所以创世记没有与海怪战争。