

The Ark, The man And The flood.

A comparative essay on the global flood myths and their stories.

By Stacey Game.

*'Atra-Hasis, pay heed to my advice, that you may live forever, destroy your home, build a boat, spurn property and save life.'*¹

An introduction:

A flood myth or deluge is a myth in which a great flood destroys the earth, usually sent by a deity in an act of divine retribution.

Humans have had myths embedded in their culture for thousands of years.

Myths did not disperse unchanged, they changed as man migrated across the earth, the core elements persisted, however characters changed, along with other details and rituals.

Myths changed and adapted to the needs of the people and the landscape.

The ancient diluvian myths of palaeolithic times, from Noah's ark, to the Greek similarities of Deucalion and Pyrrha who built an ark. From the Zoroastrians, to the oldest known written story of the epic of Gilgamesh in the 20th century BCE, almost every country and every ethnicity has a flood myth, including those hidden in plain sight. In Norse mythology when Ymir fell, all the world was drowned in his blood, except Jotnar, his household escaped on an ark.

A global myth:

A cataclysmic global flood. Different motifs have different origins. Flood myths come with a bird scout motif, an earth diver motif and even a magical creature motif. Using filo genetics such as Berezkins database you can trace the dispersal of myths.

Stories moved with immigration. Myths moved from Africa to Eurasia and down to Australia. Different myths have different categories.

In Berezkins database c2 are fire and flood myths, a clean start with a South East Asian origin. In c5a the bird scout motif has a bird find land and bring vegetation of some description back, these followed distribution into North America.

The South East Asian motif often sees two survivors or a single family-god's chosen people.

In History:

'Common sense as well as justice demands that critics should test our history of the Deluge, as they would examine any literary production of remote antiquity.'²

The memory of the deluge with the Mexicans, Egyptians, Jews and the Aztecs was associated with the same time of the year.

At the beginning of the year of the Pleiades, when the constellation culminated at midnight.

¹ Dr Iving Finkel, *The Ark Before Noah*, Hodder and Stoughton book publishers, London, (2014), (p-86).

² *The History Of Man*, Robert Grant Haliburton, F.S.A, (1863), Republished By The Royal Astronomical Society Of Toronto Canada (1920).

Examination of the traditions associated with the constellation Taurus, which once opened the year, proved that this constellation, with almost all ancient nations, was connected with a deluge.

Further the origin of the use of eggs as a symbol of the beginning of the year proves that a bird was associated with the beginning of time and with creation. The deluge and time were considered synonymous by the ancients.

The Arks and their stories:

Noah's ark- The Bible NRSV.

God told Noah that he was going to put an end to all the people of the earth as they were filled with violence. God asks Noah to build an ark of Cypress wood, make rooms in it and coat it in pitch, inside and out-(Genesis 6:15).

God gave Noah the dimensions of the ark and told Noah how to build it:

The ark was to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.

God told Noah to make a roof for it, God gave instructions to bring two of every living creature Genesis 6:19-20.

Genesis 7:12-'the rain fell on the earth for forty days and forty nights.'

Genesis 7:24 'And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred and fifty days.'

A bird is released, to find land, both a raven and a dove are used.

Genesis 8:11 'and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf.'

The ark lands on a mountain top named Ararat.

In the Arkkadian epic, Enlil, enraged against mankind, decreed that a mighty flood should consume all of humanity. He made all the other gods swear an oath not to tell man.

Enki was forbidden to speak to mankind, so he entered the reed hut of Atra-hasis, when he was asleep and spoke to the wall instead.

Atra-hasis is told to load his boat with all his precious possessions, his kith and kin, domesticated and wild animals of every kind and skilled craftsmen of every kind.

A house is to be built on the upper deck, made of reeds. It was to be coated with bitumen.

'Let her length and breadth be equal, let her floor area be one field, let her sides be one Nindanu high.'³

Three birds are released to find land, a Dove, a Swallow and a Raven. The boat ends its journey on a mountain top.

In the epic of Gilgamesh, to punish mankind for their noise, a flood is sent. Ea does not want to let the mortals die, so warns Utnapishtim in a dream to build a boat and save himself.

Utnapishtim is told to take apart his house and use the wood to make a boat.

³ Dr Irving Finkel, *The Ark Before Noah*, p-86

Utnapishtim builds a boat, hires help from the villagers. Preserving human and animal life, at dawn the storm god Adad gets to work, the storm is so strong that day turns to night.

The gods regret their decision, all their worshippers are dead. For six days and nights the storm persists. The boat lands on a single mountain top, the only part of the world not covered in water.

Utnapishtim releases a Dove to find dry land, it does not find anything. The boat holds fast, for six days and six nights.

He releases a swallow, to find dry land, but there is nothing. Finally he sends forth a raven, when it does not return, he knows the flood is receding.

Utnapishtim makes a cooked offering to the gods, although the gods do not regret their actions, as such, they agree there should have been a smaller punishment sent. Utnapishtim is granted immortality.

The Ark before Noah:

The curator of the British museum Dr Irving Finkel, met a man named Douglas Simmons in 1985, who arrived at the British museum with a bag of antiquities. It contained a Cuneiform tablet.

He started to read it 'wall, wall, reed wall, reed wall, Atra-hasis pay heed to my advice that you may live forever, destroy your house, build a boat, spurn property and save life.'⁴

This was the old Babylonian flood myth, never before being seen and being published.

The man took it away with him and it was not seen again for the best part of a decade.

In 1872 George Smith came across a clay tablet of a flood myth. This clay tablet gave dimensions of a cube boat. The cuneiform tablet had asked for a round boat, a Coracle, or in Arabic a Guffa.

The Bible was more of a coffin shape. All the boats had to do was float.

The Coracle was to be 3,600 square metres. The walls were seven metres high. They are told of the materials that they need, the rope that goes around, the wood and the bitumen.

The instructions from heaven to mankind. The animals went in two by two, just like in the Bible, however they had meant all the animals that they knew of, not all the animals of the earth.

After a story was printed in the newspaper, there were a lot of calls to make a documentary about it.

A man approached and wanted to build the boat, in a documentary. They settled on building it in south-west India.

Three ancient boat builders and a small team spent around five months building the boat.

⁴ Dr Irving Finkel, *The Ark Before Noah*, p-86

They decided if they couldn't build it to full size, they would build it as big as they could. They decided it could not sustain itself at the dimensions given.

As the structure would not withstand being dragged across the ground it was built up on stands.

There was an upper and lower deck, a house was to be built on the upper deck, made of reeds for the people to live in.

Iraq would not let any of its Bitumen out of the country so they had to get some on the black market, however it was not of the same quality. You can still find the Ark on the river bed in India.

A summary and analysis:

The cuneiform tablet of Atra-hasis, The oldest written story of the epic of Gilgamesh and the Bible, the similarities are many.

The Akkadian story of Atra-hasis, The Mesopotamian Gilgamesh and the Israelite account of Noah (Parashah Noach) are very similar because the areas in which they come from are close to one another.

The Bird scout motif has merely changed with mankind's dispersal, with the times and the people telling the story, that the readers or listeners could relate to.

The fertile crescent has shared its stories over time and these stories dispersed with immigration.

The narratives of the story serve to be symbolic in their purpose, a cleansing to wash away the old life and to start a new one, from divine punishment of mankind's sin.

The flood myths have many similarities with the earth diver motif, an ancient creation myth in which a bird, of varying description, but often a duck, dives to the bottom of the ocean to bring back dirt or vegetation, in which to create land, in a world filled with only water.

The flood myth has merely come from a much older and ancient creation myth, changing with time.

There is high confidence tracing myth dispersal, that the ancient flood myth is over thirty thousand years old, there hasn't been a single cataclysmic global flood, just a dispersal of myth with migration out of ancient Asia and across the world.

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