

THE 13TH TABLE

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Alex Mitchell

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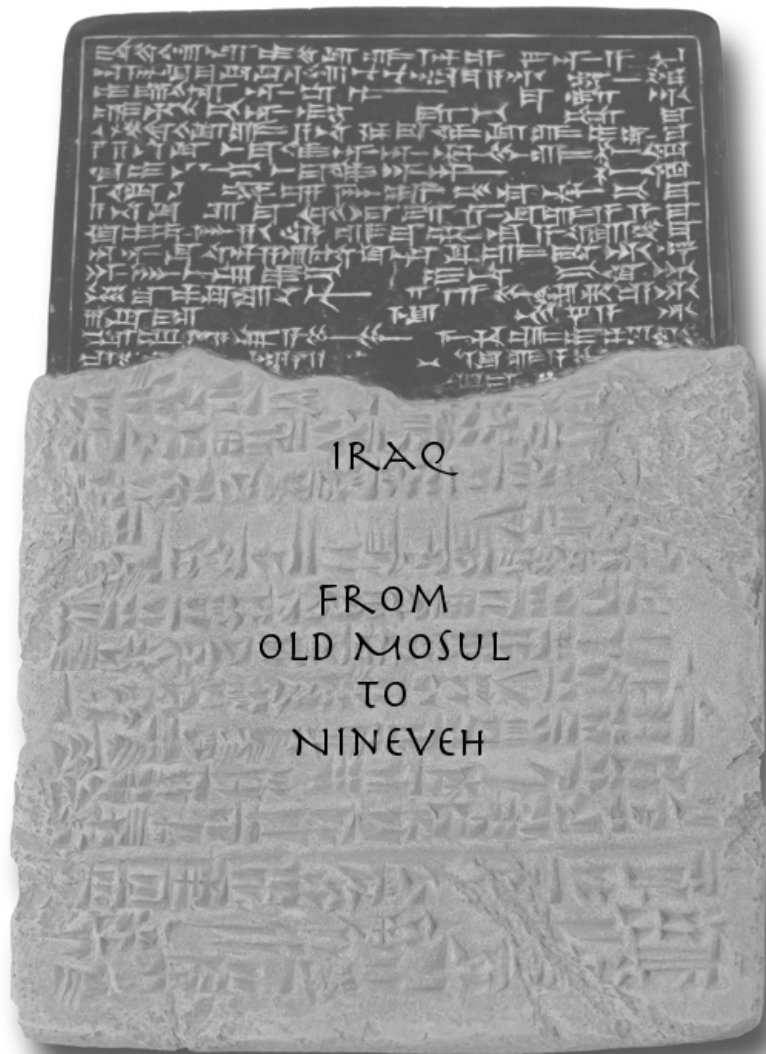
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IRAQ

FROM
OLD MOSUL
TO
NINEVEH

The Bible Flood and the Epic of Gilgamesh – A Comparison

The Noah Story of the Flood and the 11th tablet of the Epic of Gilgamesh

Introduction by Alex Mitchell

As the Babylonian and Hebrew flood narratives play such a central role in *The 13th Tablet*, this short introduction may come in handy to the avid reader! In 1872, George Smith made an amazing discovery among the clay tablets of the British Museum originally from Nineveh and other sites in Iraq. It was the eleventh tablet from a series of twelve composing the Standard Akkadian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh. It described the primordial flood with such similarities to the biblical version of the flood that he immediately saw the potential of such a parallel. Indeed, both Noah and his Babylonian counterpart Utnapishtim are warned about the imminent flood and told to build an ark with specific dimensions; a horrific flood destroys all living things; the boat rests on a mountain top; a dove and a raven are sent forth from the ark and when the bird does not return, both characters leave the ark to offer a sacrifice to the divinity.

The fact that there should be two similar versions of the flood should not come too much as a surprise. Indeed, the legend of a catastrophic flood that destroyed all of mankind except a few who escape in a boat is one of the most widespread myths throughout the world (India, China, Hawaii, Mexican-Indians, aborigines of the Andaman Islands, ancient Greece, New Zealand, Africa, Greenland, Finland, etc. all have a similar version of the primordial flood) but the legend is never told in such a similar fashion.

Based on the material evidence (and notwithstanding some differences between the texts), it would seem that the biblical narrative came second to the Babylonian one. Indeed, if Moses was the author of the Hebrew Bible then the biblical Flood narrative dates to circa 1440 B.C.E. But the story of Utnapishtim, even though it is known from the Epic of Gilgamesh which dates back to the 7th century B.C.E. (from an original edition by the incantation priest Sîn-lēqi-unninni sometime between 1300-1100 B.C.E.), it is actually found in earlier Epics, such the Epic of Atrahasis (circa 1750-1650 B.C.E. also found by George Smith, in Nineveh, May 14, 1873) and from even earlier Sumerian poems in Old Babylonian (circa 2000 B.C.E.). Yet, the Mosaic account may also be an accurate written form of an ancient oral tradition of the original catastrophic event that gave rise to the Mesopotamian, Hebrew, and many other written texts. It is also possible that the Noah story reinterpreted the Babylonian story with a different theological twist (e.g. “humans had turned evil and needed to be cleansed” in the biblical version in contrast to “humans made noise, and bothered the gods” in the other). Ultimately, according to the bible itself the ancestors of the Jews originally came from Mesopotamia (Abraham of Ur), so both interpretations are possible.

King James Bible

FROM GUTENBERG PROJECT: "Genesis 6-9"

[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10/10-h/10-](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10/10-h/10-h.htm#The_First_Book_of_Moses_Called_Genesis)

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6:1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

6:2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

6:3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

6:4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

6:5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

6:7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

6:9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

6:10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6:11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

6:12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

6:13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

6:14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

6:15 And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

6:16 A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

6:17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

6:18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

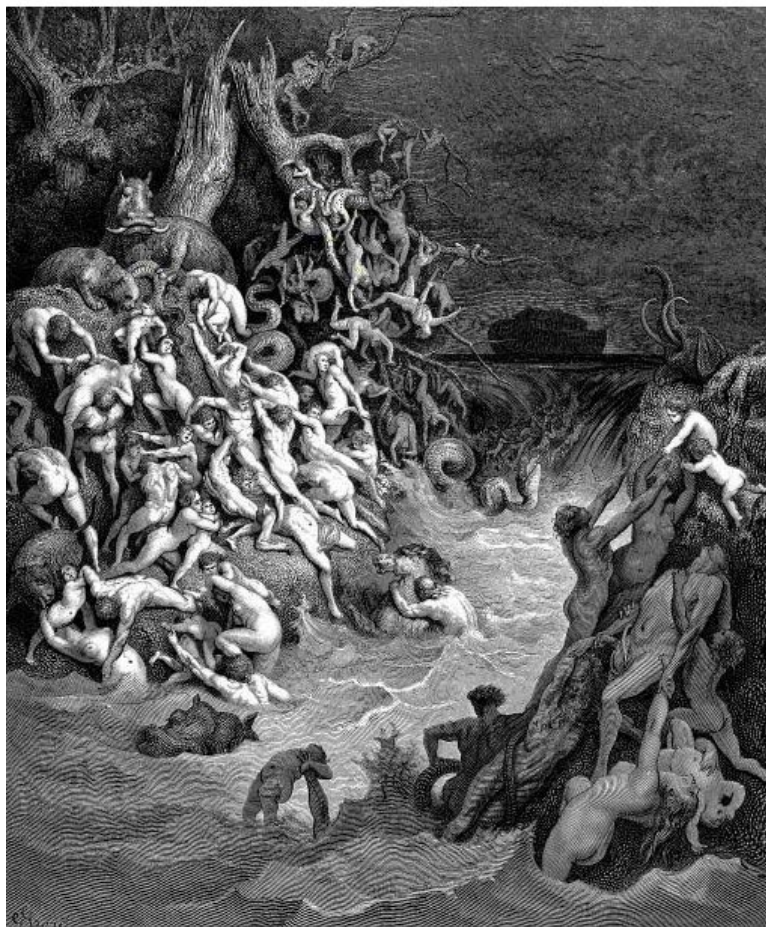
6:19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

6:20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.

6:21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

6:22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

"The World destroyed by Water" by Gustave Doré



7:1 And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

7:2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

7:3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

7:4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

7:5 And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

7:6 And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

7:7 And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

7:8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

7:9 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

7:10 And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

7:11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

7:12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

7:13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

7:14 They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

7:15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

7:16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

7:17 And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

7:18 And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

7:19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

7:20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

7:21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

7:22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

7:23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

7:24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

"The Deluge" by Gustave Doré



www.wikipedia.org

8:1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged;

8:2 The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;

8:3 And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

8:4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

8:5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

8:6 And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:

8:7 And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

8:8 Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;

8:9 But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

8:10 And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;

8:11 And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

8:12 And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

8:13 And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

8:14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

8:15 And God spake unto Noah, saying,

8:16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

8:17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.

8:18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

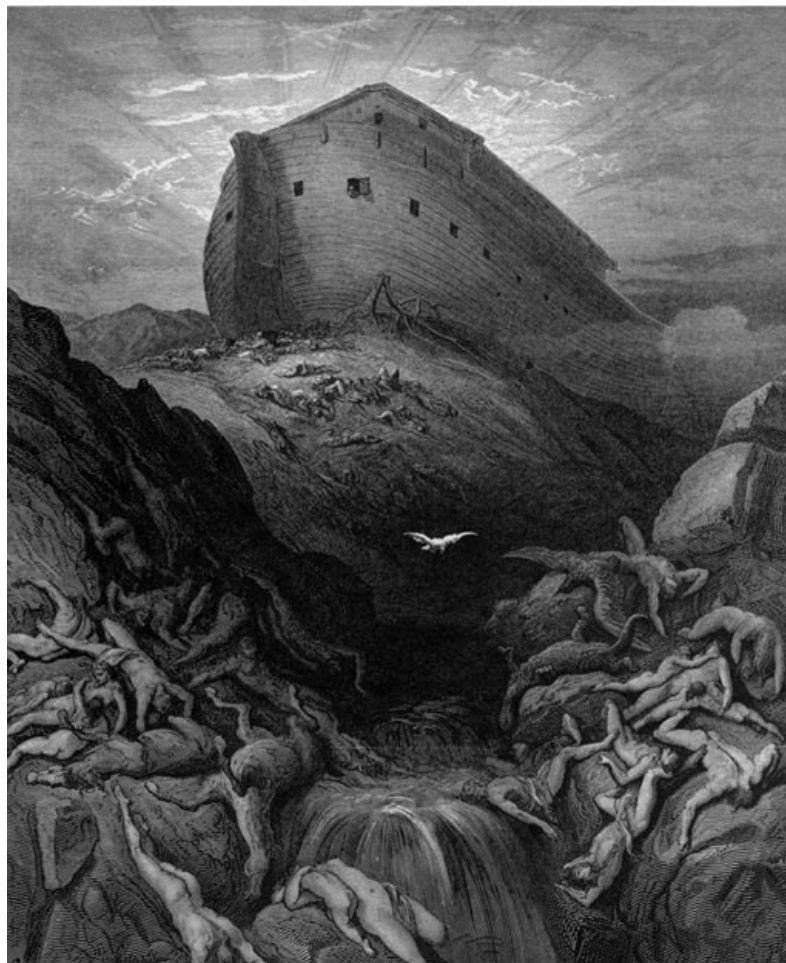
8:19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

8:22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

"The Dove sent forth from the Ark" by Gustave Doré



www.wikipedia.org

9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

9:2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.

9:3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

9:5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

9:7 And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

9:8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

9:9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

9:10 And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

9:11 And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

9:12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

9:13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

9:14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

9:15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

9:16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

9:17 And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

PASSAGE 2: "The Babylonian Legend of the Deluge as Told to the Hero Gilgamish by his Ancestor Uta-Napishtim, Who Had Been Made Immortal by the Gods."

FROM GUTENBERG PROJECT

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7096/pg7096.html>



INTRODUCTION

(BY E. A. Wallis Budge who published "The Babylonian Story of the Deluge as Told by Assyrian Tablets from Nineveh")

The form of the Legend of the Deluge given below is that which is found on the Eleventh of the Series of Twelve Tablets in the Library of Nebo at Nineveh, which described the life and exploits of Gilgamish (), an early king of the city of Erech. As we have seen above, the Legend of the Deluge has in reality no connection with the Epic of Gilgamish, but was introduced into it by the editors of the Epic at a comparatively late period, perhaps even during the reign of Ashur-bani-pal (B.C. 668-626). A summary of the contents of the other Tablets of the Gilgamish Series is given in the following section of this short monograph. It is therefore only necessary to state here that Gilgamish, who was horrified and almost beside himself when his bosom friend and companion Enkidu (Eab ni) died, meditated deeply how he could escape death himself. He knew that his ancestor Uta-Napishtim had become immortal, therefore he determined to set out for the place where Uta-Napishtim lived so that he might obtain from him the secret of immortality. Guided by a dream in which he saw the direction of the place where Uta-Napishtim lived, Gilgamish set out for the Mountain of the Sunset, and, after great toil and many difficulties, came to the shore of a vast sea. Here he met Ur-Shanabi, the boatman of Uta-Napishtim, who was persuaded to carry him in his boat over the "waters of death," and at length he landed on the shore of the country of Uta-Napishtim. The immortal came down to the shore and asked the newcomer the object of his visit, and Gilgamish told him of the death of his great friend Enkidu, and of his desire to escape from death and to find immortality. Uta-Napishtim having made to Gilgamish some remarks which seem to indicate that in his opinion death was inevitable,

1. Gilgamish [10] said unto Uta-Napishtim, to Uta-Napishtim the remote: 2. "I am looking at thee, Uta-Napishtim. 3. Thy person is not altered; even as am I so art thou. 4. Verily, nothing about thee is changed; even as am I so art thou. 5. [Moved is my] heart to do battle, 6. But thou art at leisure and dost lie upon thy back. 7. How then wast thou able to enter the company of the gods and see life?"

Thereupon Uta-Napishtim related to Gilgamish the Story of the Deluge, and the Eleventh Tablet continues thus:—

8. Uta-Napishtim said unto him, to Gilgamish: 9. "I will reveal unto thee, O Gilgamish, a hidden mystery, 10. And a secret matter of the gods I will declare unto thee. 11. Shurippak, [11] a city which thou thyself knowest, 12. On [the bank] of the river Puratti (Euphrates) is situated, 13. That city was old and the gods [dwelling] within it— 14. Their hearts induced the great gods to make a wind-storm (a-bu-bi), [12] 15. Their father Anu, 16. Their counsellor, the warrior Enlil, 17. Their messenger En-urta [and] 18. Their prince Ennugi. 19. Nin-igi-azag, Ea, was with them [in council] and 20. reported their word to the house of reeds.

[First Speech of Ea to Uta-Napishtim who is sleeping in a reed hut.]

21. O House of reeds, O House of reeds! O Wall, O Wall! 22. O House of reeds, hear! O Wall, understand! 23. O man of Shurippak, son of Ubara-Tutu. 24. Throw down the house, build a ship, 25. Forsake wealth, seek after life, 26. Abandon possessions, save thy life, 27. Carry grain of every kind into the ship. 28. The ship which thou shalt build, 29. The dimensions thereof shall be measured, 30. The breadth and the length thereof shall be the same. 31. ... the ocean, provide it with a roof."

[Uta-Napishtim's answer to Ea.]

32. "I understood and I said unto Ea, my lord: 33. [I comprehend] my lord, that which thou hast ordered, 34. I will regard it with great reverence, and will perform it. 35. But what shall I say to the town, to the multitude, and to the elders?"

[Second Speech of Ea.]

36. "Ea opened his mouth and spake 37. And said unto his servant, myself, 38. ... Thus shalt thou say unto them: 39. Ill-will hath the god Enlil formed against me, 40. Therefore I can no longer dwell in your city, 41. And never more will I turn my countenance upon the soil of Enlil. 42. I will descend into the ocean to dwell with my lord Ea. 43. But upon you he will rain riches: 44. A catch of birds, a catch of fish 45. ... an [abundant] harvest, 46. ... the prince (?) of the darkness 47. ... shall make a violent cyclone [to fall upon you]."

[The Building of the Ship.]

48. As soon as [the dawn] broke...

[Lines 49-54 broken away.]

55. The weak [man] ... brought bitumen, 56. The strong [man] ... brought what was needed. 57. On the fifth day I decided upon its plan. 58. According to the plan its walls were 10 Gar (i.e. 120 cubits) high, 59. And the circuit of the roof thereof was

equally 10 Gar. 60. I measured out the hull thereof and marked it out (?) 61. I covered (?) it six times. 62. Its exterior I divided into seven, 63. Its interior I divided into nine, 64. Water bolts I drove into the middle of it. 65. I provided a steering pole, and fixed what was needful for it, 66. Six sar of bitumen I poured over the inside wall, 67. Three sar of pitch I poured into the inside. 68. The men who bear loads brought three sar of oil, 69. Besides a sar of oil which the offering consumed, 70. And two sar of oil which the boatman hid. 71. I slaughtered oxen for the [work]people, 72. I slew sheep every day. 73. Beer, sesame wine, oil and wine 74. I made the people drink as if they were water from the river. 75. I celebrated a feast-day as if it had been New Year's Day. 76. I opened [a box of ointment], I laid my hands in unguent. 77. Before the sunset the ship was finished. 78. [Since] ... was difficult. 79. The shipbuilders brought the ... of the ship, above and below, 80. ... two-thirds of it.

[The Loading of the Ship.]

81. With everything that I possessed I loaded it (i.e. the ship). 82. With everything that I possessed of silver I loaded it. 83. With everything that I possessed of gold I loaded it. 84. With all that I possessed of living grain I loaded it. 85. I made to go up into the ship all my family and kinsfolk, 86. The cattle of the field, the beasts of the field, all handicraftsmen I made them go up into it. 87. The god Shamash had appointed me a time (saying) 88. The Power of Darkness will at eventide make a rain-flood to fall; 89. Then enter into the ship and shut thy door. 90. The appointed time drew nigh; 91. The Power of Darkness made a rain-flood to fall at eventide. 92. I watched the coming of the [approaching] storm, 93. "When I saw it terror possessed me, 94. I went into the ship and shut my door. 95. To the pilot of the ship, Puzur-B I (or Puzur-Amurri) the sailor 96. I committed the great house (i.e. ship), together with the contents thereof.

[The Abubu (Cyclone) and its effects Described.]

97. As soon as the gleam of dawn shone in the sky 98. A black cloud from the foundation of heaven came up. 99. Inside it the god Adad (Ramm nu) thundered, 100. The gods Nab and Sharru (i.e. Marduk) went before, 101. Marching as messengers over high land and plain, 102. Irragal (Nergal) tore out the post of the ship, 103. En-urta (Ninib) went on, he made the storm to descend. 104. The Anunnaki [13] brandished their torches, 105. With their glare they lighted up the land. 106. The whirlwind (or, cyclone) of Adad swept up to heaven. 107. Every gleam of light was turned into darkness. 108. ... the land ... as if ... had laid it waste. 109. A whole day long [the flood descended] ... 110. Swiftly it mounted up [the water] reached to the mountains 111. [The water] attacked the people like a battle. 112. Brother saw not brother. 113. Men could not be known (or, recognized) in heaven. 114. The gods were terrified at the cyclone. 115. They betook themselves to flight and went up into the heaven of Anu. 116. The gods crouched like a dog and cowered by the wall. 117. The goddess Ishtar cried out like a woman in travail. 118. The Lady of the Gods lamented with a loud voice [saying]:

[Ishtar's Lament.]

119. "Verily the former dispensation is turned into mud, 120. Because I commanded evil among the company of the gods. 121. When I commanded evil among the company of the gods, 122. I commanded battle for the destruction of my people. 123.

Did I of myself bring forth my people 124. That they might fill the sea like little fishes?"

[Uta-Napishtim's Story continued.]

125. The gods of the Anunnaki wailed with her. 126. The gods bowed themselves, and sat down, and wept. 127. Their lips were shut tight (in distress) ... 128. For six days and nights 129. The storm raged, and the cyclone overwhelmed the land.

[The Abating of the Storm.]

130. When the seventh day approached the cyclone and the raging flood ceased: 131. –now it had fought like an army. 132. The sea became quiet and went down, and the cyclone and the rain-storm ceased. 133. I looked over the sea and a calm had come, 134. And all mankind were turned into mud, 135. The land had been laid flat like a terrace. 136. I opened the air-hole and the light fell upon my face, 137. I bowed myself, I sat down, I cried, 138. My tears poured down over my cheeks. 139. I looked over the quarters of the world—open sea! 140. After twelve days an island appeared. 141. The ship took its course to the land of Nisir. 142. The mountain of Nisir held the ship, it let it not move. 143. The first day, the second day, the mountain of Nisir held the ship and let it not move. 144. The third day, the fourth day, the mountain of Nisir held the ship and let it not move. 145. The fifth day, the sixth day, the mountain of Nisir held the ship and let it not move. 146. When the seventh day had come 147. I brought out a dove and let her go free. 148. The dove flew away and [then] came back; 149. Because she had no place to alight on she came back. 150. I brought out a swallow and let her go free. 151. The swallow flew away and [then] came back; 152. Because she had no place to alight on she came back. 153. I brought out a raven and let her go free. 154. The raven flew away, she saw the sinking waters. 155. She ate, she pecked in the ground, she croaked, she came not back.

[Uta-Napishtim Leaves the Ship.]

156. Then I brought out everything to the four winds and offered up a sacrifice; 157. I poured out a libation on the peak of the mountain. 158. Seven by seven I set out the vessels, 159. Under them I piled reeds, cedarwood and myrtle (?). 160. The gods smelt the savour, 161. The gods smelt the sweet savour. 162. The gods gathered together like flies over him that sacrificed.

[Speech of Ishtar, Lady of the Gods.]

163. Now when the Lady of the Gods came nigh, 164. She lifted up the priceless jewels which Anu had made according to her desire, [saying] 165. "O ye gods here present, as I shall never forget the lapis-lazuli jewels of my neck 166. So shall I ever think about these days, and shall forget them nevermore! 167. Let the gods come to the offering, 168. But let not Enlil come to the offering, 169. Because he would not accept counsel and made the cyclone, 170. And delivered my people over to destruction."

[The Anger of Enlil (B I).]

171. Now when Enlil came nigh 172. He saw the ship; then was Enlil wroth 173. And he was filled with anger against the gods, the Igigi [saying]: [14]

174. "What kind of a being hath escaped with his life? 175. He shall not remain alive, a man among the destruction!"

[Speech of En-Urta.]

176. Then En-Urta opened his mouth and spake 177. And said unto the warrior Enlil (B 1): 178. Who besides the god Ea can make a plan? 179. The god Ea knoweth everything. 180. He opened his mouth and spake 181. And said unto the warrior Enlil (B 1), 182. O Prince among the gods, thou warrior, 183. How couldst thou, not accepting counsel, make a cyclone? 184. He who is sinful, on him lay his sin, 185. He who transgresseth, on him lay his transgression. 186. But be merciful that [everything] be not destroyed; be long-suffering that [man be not blotted out]. 187. Instead of thy making a cyclone, 188. Would that a lion had come and diminished mankind. 189. Instead of thy making a cyclone 190. Would that a wolf had come and diminished mankind. 191. Instead of thy making a cyclone 192. Would that a famine had arisen and [laid waste] the land. 193. Instead of thy making a cyclone 194. Would that Urta (the Plague god) had risen up and [laid waste] the land. 195. As for me I have not revealed the secret of the great gods. 196. I made Atra-hasis to see a vision, and thus he heard the secret of the gods. 197. Now therefore counsel him with counsel."

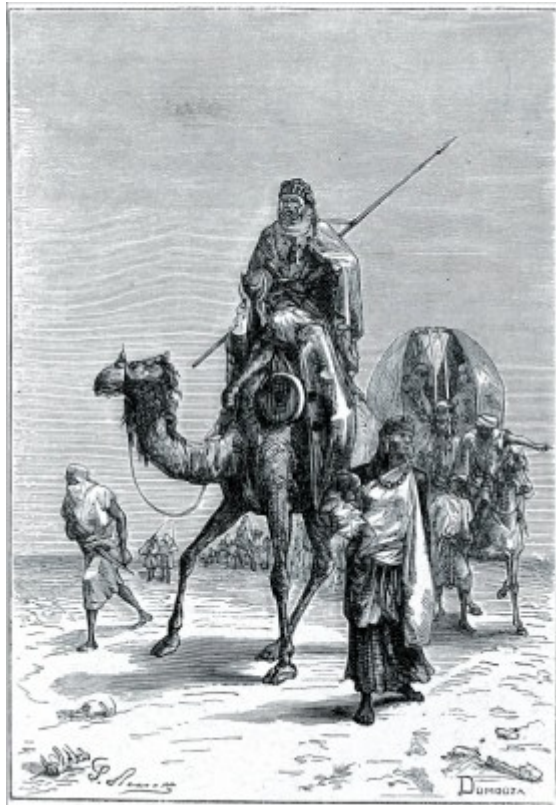
[Ea deifies Uta-Napishtim and his Wife.]

198. "Then the god Ea went up into the ship, 199. He seized me by the hand and brought me forth. 200. He brought forth my wife and made her to kneel by my side. 201. He turned our faces towards each other, he stood between us, he blessed us [saying], 202. Formerly Uta-Napishtim was a man merely, 203. But now let Uta-Napishtim and his wife be like unto the gods, ourselves. 204. Uta-Napishtim shall dwell afar off, at the mouth of the rivers."

[Uta-Napishtim Ends his Story of the Deluge.]

205. "And they took me away to a place afar off, and made me to dwell at the mouth of the rivers."

The Travels of Benjamin Tudela

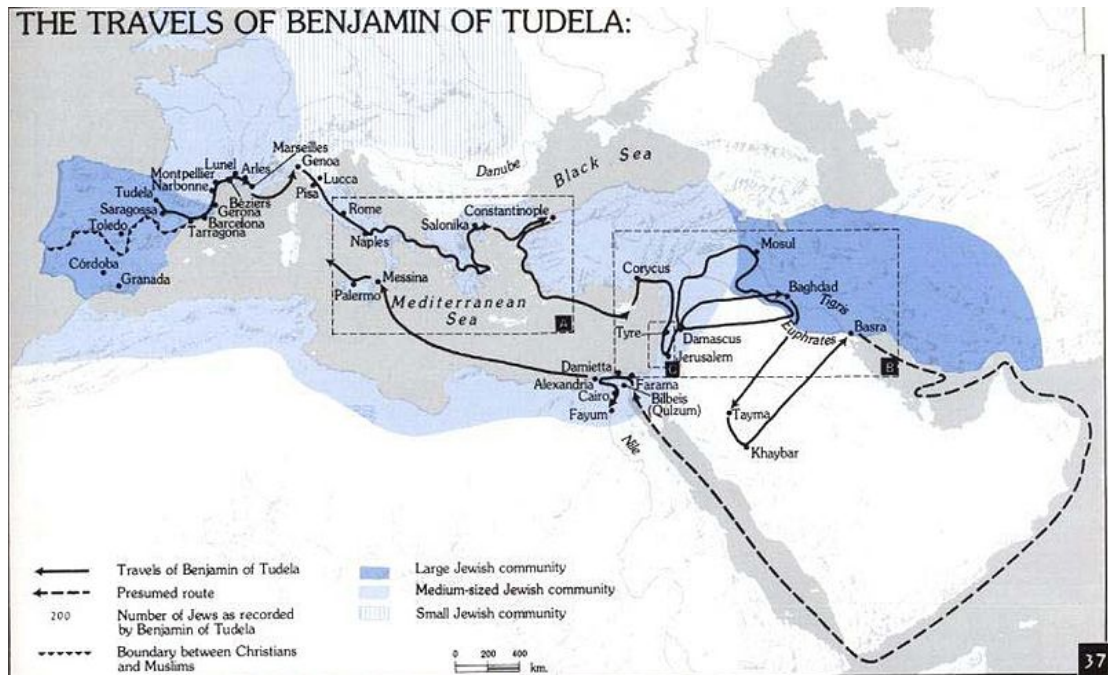


Benjamin of Tudela in the Sahara, in the 13th century.
Engraving by Dumouza, 19th century - Wikipedia

Introduction to the Travels of Benjamin of Tudela

Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela (Hebrew: בֶּנְיָמִין מְטוּדֵלָה) (Tudela, Spain, 1130 - 1173) is an essential character in *The 13th Tablet* (->pages 30-1, 48-9, 84-7, 99, 124, 140, 168, 170, 176-7, 179, 180-2, 186-8, 190-3, 201, 203-6, 267, 375). He is quite possibly, with Marco Polo, one of the most famous travellers of the Middle-Ages. He travelled throughout Europe, Africa and Asia. His fascinating account, originally written in Hebrew and later compiled as the *Itineraries of Benjamin of Tudela* from his jotted notes, is a mixture of geographic, cultural, commercial and ethnographic data. It is also a treasure of information on medieval Jewry, as he described each Jewish community he encountered in his travels (i.e. local customs, population and leaders). Most Jews in the 12th century were able to travel in Christian as well as Muslim lands by moving from one Jewish community to the next. But few did so as extensively as Rabbi Benjamin. He was a learned man, who spoke many languages and whose intellectual curiosity was seemingly boundless. He was well versed in the history of ancient (and non-Jewish) civilizations and was curious of all the religious faiths of his time (even rather obscure ones). For a man who travelled so far, and described so many different men of his time, we know virtually nothing of his personal biography besides the fact that he was from Tudela in the Kingdom of Navarre.

Choice of extracts from Benjamin Tudela's Travels



Map from Marcus N. Adler, *The itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela, Critical text, translation and commentary* (New York, 1907)

Rome

There are many wonderful structures in the city, different from any others in the world. Including both its inhabited and ruined parts, Rome is about twenty-four miles in circumference. (...) commencing from King Tarquinius down to Nero and Tiberius, who lived at the time of Jesus the Nazarene, ending with Pepin, who freed the land of Sepharad from Islam, and was father of Charlemagne. (...) In the church of St. John in the Lateran there are two bronze columns taken from the Temple, the handiwork of King Solomon, each column being engraved "Solomon the son of David." The Jews of Rome told me that every year upon the 9th of Ab they found the columns exuding moisture like water. There also is the cave where Titus the son of Vespasianus stored the Temple vessels which he brought from Jerusalem.

Pozzuoli (southern Italy)

A spring issues forth from beneath the ground containing the oil which is called petroleum. People collect it from the surface of the water and use it medicinally. There are also hot-water springs to the number of about twenty, which issue from the ground and are situated near the sea, and every man who has any disease can go and bathe in them and get cured. All the afflicted of Lombardy visit it in the summer-time for that purpose.

Constantinople

The circumference of the city of Constantinople is eighteen miles; half of it is surrounded by the sea, and half by land, and it is situated upon two arms of the sea, one coming from the sea of Russia, and one from the sea of Sepharad. (...) It is a busy city, and merchants come to it from every country by sea or land, and there is none like it in the world except Bagdad, the great city of Islam. In Constantinople is the church of Santa Sophia, and the seat of the Pope of the Greeks, since the Greeks do not obey the Pope of Rome. (...) A quantity of wealth beyond telling is brought hither year by year as tribute from the two islands and the castles and villages which are there.

(...) Close to the walls of the palace is also a place of amusement belonging to the king, which is called the Hippodrome, and every year on the anniversary of the birth of Jesus the king gives a great entertainment there. And in that place men from all the races of the world come before the king and queen with jugglery and without jugglery, and they introduce lions, leopards, bears, and wild asses, and they engage them in combat with one another; and the same thing is done with birds. No entertainment like this is to be found in any other land.

Syria/Lebanon

In the neighbourhood dwells a people called Al-Hashishim. They do not believe in the religion of Islam, but follow one of their own folk, whom they regard as their prophet, and all that he tells them to do they carry out, whether for death or life. They call him the Sheik Al Hashishim, and he is known as their Elder. At his word these mountaineers go out and come in. (...) Ten miles therefrom a people dwell who are at war with the men of Sidon; they are called Druses, and are pagans. They inhabit the mountains and the clefts of the rocks; they have no king or ruler, but dwell independent in these high places, and their border extends to Mount Hermon, which is a three days' journey. (...) They say that at the time when the soul leaves the body it passes in the case of a good man into the body of a newborn child, and in the case of a bad man into the body of a dog or an ass. Such are their foolish beliefs.

Israel

From Jerusalem it is two parasangs to Bethlehem, which is called by the Christians Beth-Leon, and close thereto, at a distance of about half a mile, at the parting of the way, is the pillar of Rachel's grave, which is made up of eleven stones, corresponding with the number of the sons of Jacob. Upon it is a cupola resting on four columns, and all the Jews that pass by carve their names upon the stones of the pillar. At Bethlehem there are two Jewish dyers. It is a land of brooks of water, and contains wells and fountains.

At a distance of six parasangs is St. Abram de Bron, which is Hebron; the old city stood on the mountain, but is now in ruins; and in the valley by the field of Machpelah lies the present city. Here there is the great church called St. Abram, and this was a Jewish place of worship at the time of the Mohammedan rule, but the Gentiles have erected there six tombs, respectively called those of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah. The custodians tell the pilgrims that these are the tombs of

the Patriarchs, for which information the pilgrims give them money. If a Jew comes, and gives a special reward, the custodian of the cave opens unto him a gate of iron, which was constructed by our forefathers, and then he is able to descend below by means of steps, holding a lighted candle in his hand. He then reaches a cave, in which nothing is to be found, and a cave beyond, which is likewise empty, but when he reaches the third cave behold there are six sepulchres, those of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, respectively facing those of Sarah, Rebekah and Leah. And upon the graves are inscriptions cut in stone; upon the grave of Abraham is engraved "This is the grave of Abraham"; upon that of Isaac, "This is the grave of Isaac, the son of Abraham our Father"; upon that of Jacob, "This is the grave of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham our Father"; and upon the others, "This is the grave of Sarah," "This is the grave of Rebekah," and "This is the grave of Leah." A lamp burns day and night upon the graves in the cave.

Iraq

Thence it is two days to Mosul, which is Assur the Great, and here dwell about 7,000 Jews, at their head being R. Zakkai the Nasi of the seed of David, and R. Joseph surnamed Burhan-al-mulk, the astronomer to the King Sin-ed-din, the brother of Nur-ed-din, King of Damascus. Mosul is the frontier town of the land of Persia. It is a very large and ancient city, situated on the river Hiddekel (Tigris), and is connected with Nineveh by means of a bridge. Nineveh is in ruins, but amid the ruins there are villages and hamlets, and the extent of the city may be determined by the walls, which extend forty parasangs to the city of Irbil. The city of Nineveh is on the river Hiddekel. In the city of Assur (Mosul) is the synagogue of Obadiah, built by Jonah; also the synagogue of Nahum the Elkoshite.

In Bagdad there are twenty-eight Jewish Synagogues, situated either in the city itself or in Al-Karkh on the other side of the Tigris; for the river divides the metropolis into two parts. The great synagogue has columns of marble of various colours overlaid with silver and gold, and on these columns are sentences of the Psalms in golden letters. And in front of the ark are about ten steps of marble. The city of Bagdad is twenty miles in circumference, situated in a land of palms, gardens and plantations, the like of which is not to be found in the whole land of Shinar. People come thither with merchandise from all lands. Wise men live there, philosophers who know all manner of wisdom, and magicians expert in all manner of witchcraft.

(...) Thence it is a day's journey to Babylon, which is the Babel of old. The ruins thereof are thirty miles in extent. The ruins of the palace of Nebuchadnezzar are still to be seen there, but people are afraid to enter them on account of the serpents and scorpions.

Further East

Thence it is four days' journey to Tibet, the country in whose forests the musk is found. Thence it takes twenty-eight days to the mountains of Naisabur by the river Gozan. (...) They are in league with the Kofar-al-Turak [Mongols], who worship the wind and live in the wilderness, and who do not eat bread, nor drink wine, but live on raw uncooked meat. They have no noses, and in lieu thereof they have two small

holes, through which they breathe. They eat animals both clean and unclean, and they are very friendly towards the Israelites. Fifteen years ago they overran the country of Persia with a large army and took the city of Rayy; they smote it with the edge of the sword, took all the spoil thereof, and returned by way of the wilderness. Such an invasion had not been known in the land of Persia for many years.

For the Full English text: Gutenberg Project <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14981/14981-8.txt>

For the Full Hebrew/English edition:

http://www.teachittome.com/seforim2/seforim/masaos_binyomin_mitudela_with_english.pdf

Mosul – The old Nineveh – Visual Impressions





The Fallen Stair Door



Cellar Windows



The Room



The Hunchedback (Al Hadba'a) of Mosul



Some Doors Are without Locks



Bird territory



Two minarets



Iraqi Private Sectors Power Plans



The Bells Does Not Ring Any More in Iraq



An Old World Roof (Nineveh)



The Roof



Al Zakary'ya's House



Iraqi School



Last Blacksmith of Old Nineveh



Cracks in History Wall



Old Nineveh



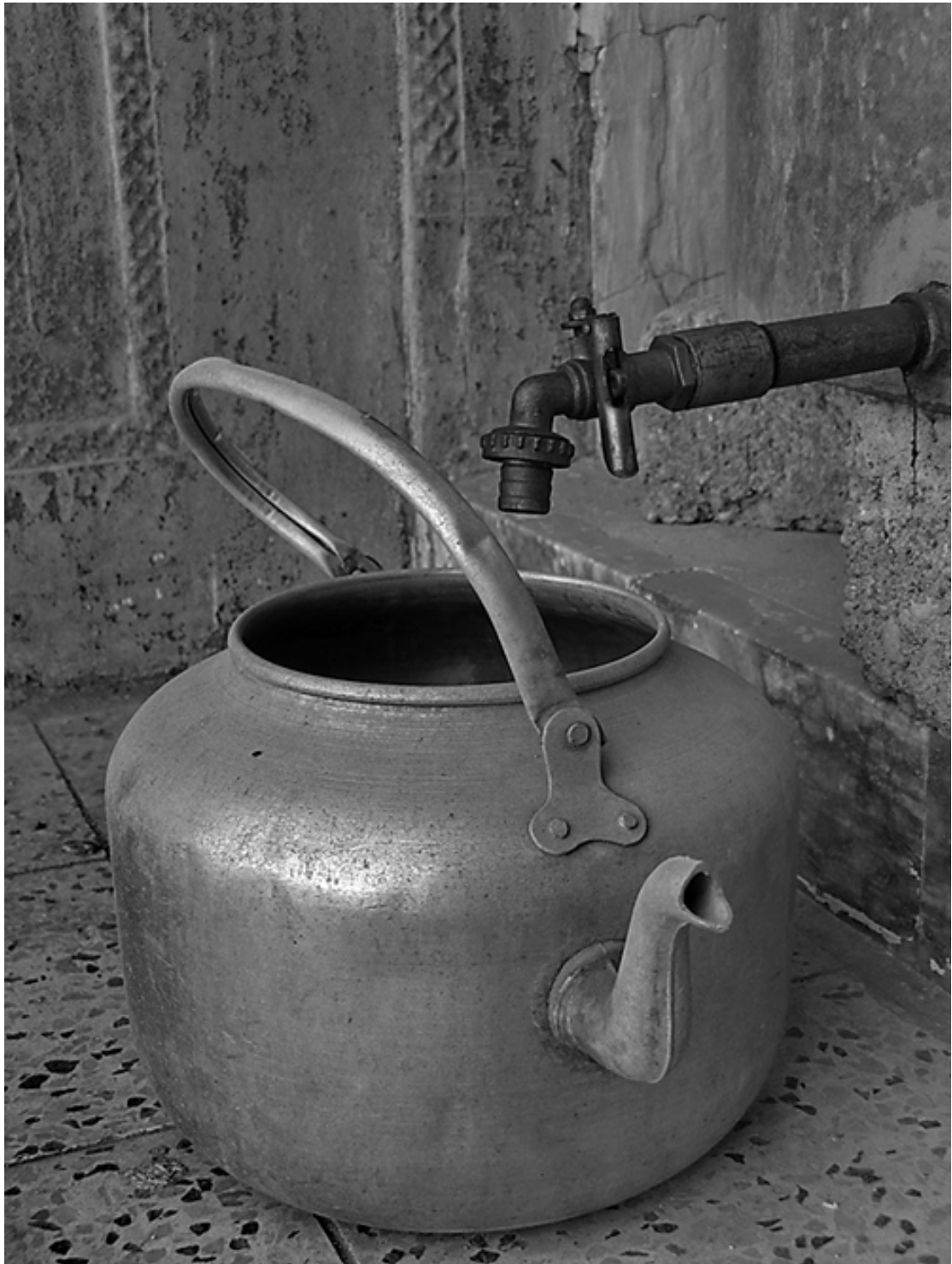
Light at the End of the Tunnel



Wall Details



The Sky Over Mosul



Usable



The City 1



The City 2



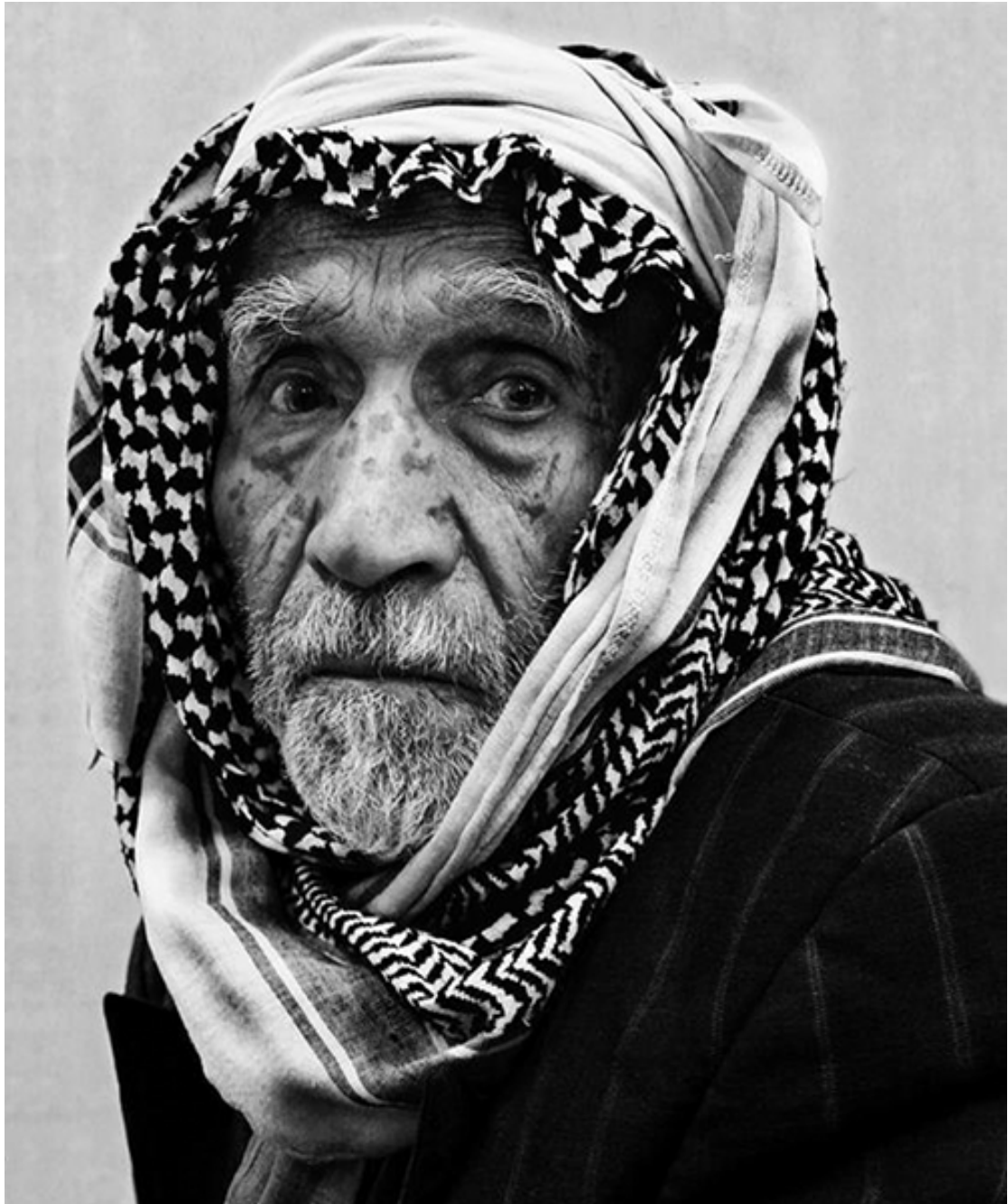
Two Mosques



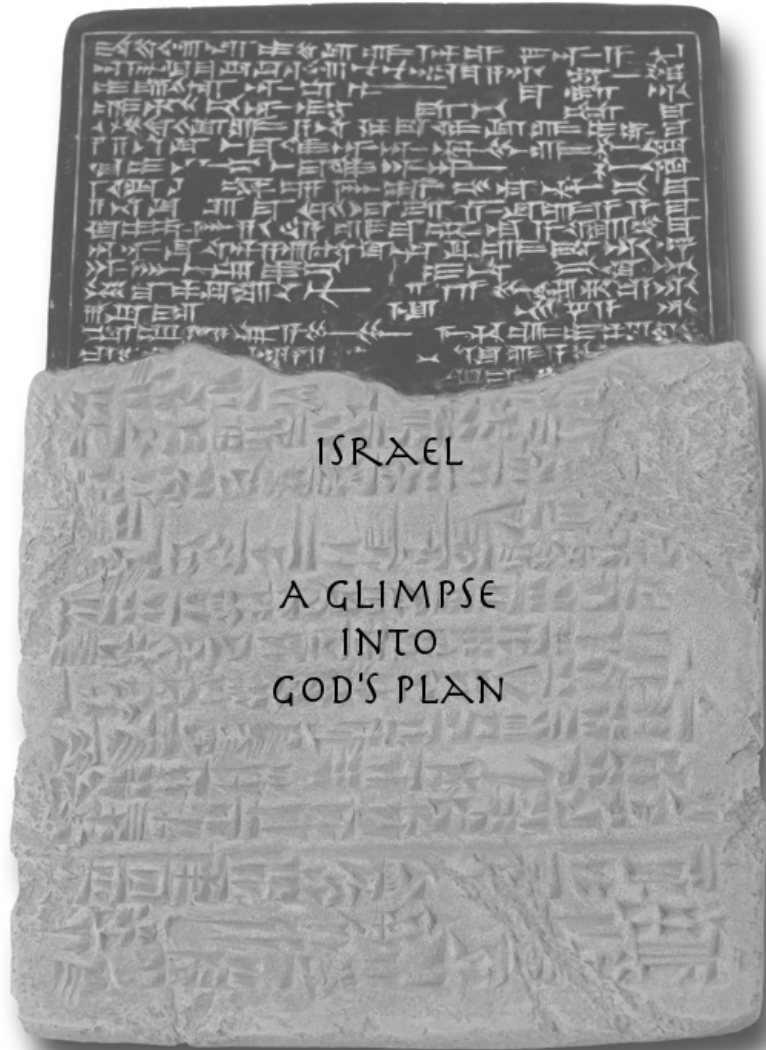
Home Altar



Selene , The Iraqi Nun



Tired Iraqi Face



ISRAEL

A GLIMPSE
INTO
GOD'S PLAN

Safed – The mystical City of the Jews – Visual Impression









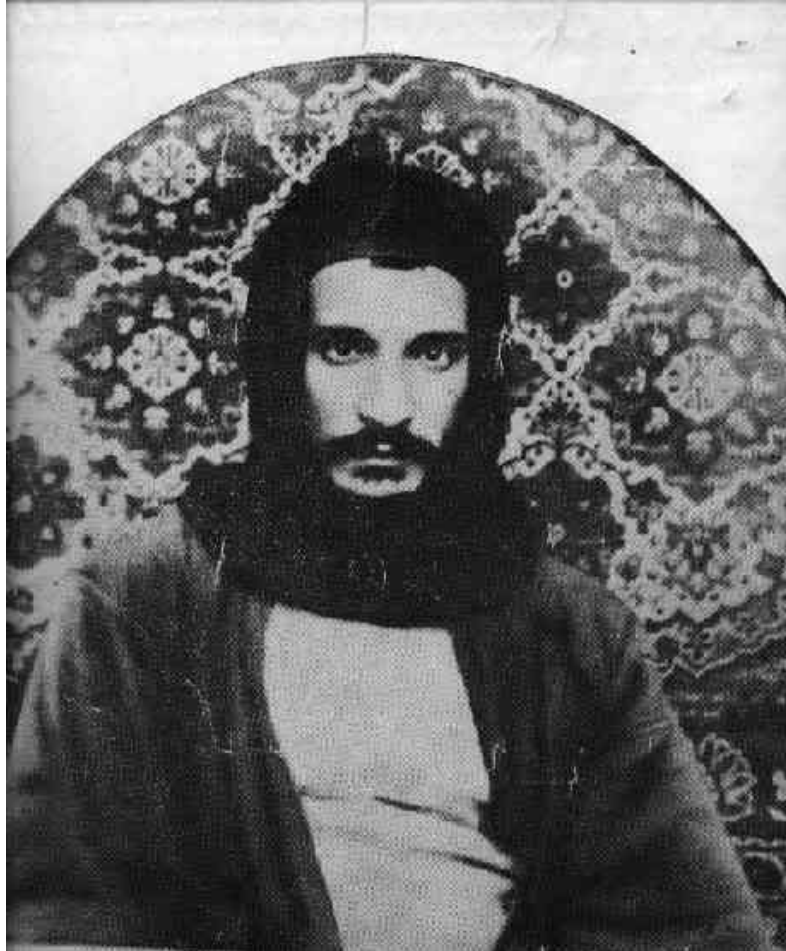








Baba Sali and his experience in the Ari Sephardi Shul in Safed



Rabbi Yisrael Abuchatzzeirah (1890-1984), affectionately known to his thousands of followers as Baba Sali [Arabic for "our praying father"] was a leading Moroccan rabbi and devoted Talmudic scholar and kabbalist. He was a teacher and holy man among the Sephardic community in Morocco and Israel. His burial place in Netivot, Israel, has become a shrine (The day of his death in 1984 drew more than 100,000 mourners to his gravesite in less than twenty-four hours). His ancestor was Rabbi Shmuel Abuhatzzeirah, born in Palestine in the 16th century. This Rabbi Shmuel lived in Damascus for a while, where he studied Torah together with the great kabbalist Rabbi Chaim Vital, himself a disciple of Itschak Ashkenasi Luria (the Ari), the greatest Kabbalist of all time and founder of modern Kabbalah.

The Ari was called "The divine Itschak" or "Arizal". Although his writings go back 400 years ago, they were still hidden from the general public until very recently. His book "Ets Chaim" (*Tree of Life*), compiled after his death by his disciple Chaim Vital, was the founding work for mainstream Kabbalah up to modern times. This vast compilation, made up of numerous volumes, only circulated in manuscript form amongst mystics for over 100 years, but it was eventually "leaked" out of the circle and first published in 1782.

In the 20th century, among the numerous stories attributed to the devout Baba Sali until the early 1980s, one story is of particular interest to us as it concerns the so-called Ari room which has great significance in *The 13th Tablet* (-> chapters 18, 19,

and 20). The story below describes a trip made by Baba Sali to Safed in 1921 and his “exorcism” of the Ari Sephardi synagogue. Indeed according to legend, until his arrival, the room where the great mystic Ari was said to have been visited by the Prophet Elijah in the 16th century, was closed to all visitors. Whoever entered this recess died a miserable death. Baba Sali entered the room and prayed so intensely that he somehow cleansed the Ari room. Today, the tiny room is kept as a shrine and is visited by thousands of devotees every year. It is our hope that this short extract will give the reader a feel of the mystical atmosphere that still reigns in Safed. This is where the Renaissance of Kabbalah took place in the 16th century after a long hiatus since Bar Yochai wrote the Zohar in the 1st century C.E., a mystical book still central to the study of Kabbalah. It is a strange place, high atop a mountain, where they say the *Schechina* or Manifest Presence of God still rests above the city.

Baba Sali's visit to the synagogue of the holy Ari

(A slightly shortened version by Alex Mitchell, based on the story found in E. Alfasi, Y. Torgeman (2011). Baba Sali. Our holy teacher: his life, piety, teachings and miracles. New York: Judaica Press, pp. 27-28)

During his stay in Israel, Baba Sali visited the city of the Kabbalists, Safed. There, he met many great scholars, among them the renowned Rav (Rabbi) Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri. The two of them, Baba Sali - just over thirty years of age - and Rav Alfandri, who was already past one hundred years of age, discussed Kabbalah for a long time.

During this visit, Baba Sali had wanted to pray in the synagogue of the holy Ari, but the building had been locked for a long time and visitors were not allowed.

Until then, whoever entered the synagogue met his death. To stop these tragedies from occurring, it was decided to lock up the synagogue completely. Rav Moshe Shetrit, who was one of Rav Yisrael's first attendants and who was about twelve years old at the time, described what happened when this visit took place.

"One day, not long after we arrived in Jerusalem, the Rav asked me to call a taxi so that he could visit the holy city of Safed. When we arrived, he was greeted by the leading rabbis of the community and escorted to an apartment. After he rested, he summoned me and asked if I would find the person who held the key to the synagogue, because he wished to pray there.

"The Rav went to the synagogue of the holy Ari, and I went to find the key to this barred building. The people of the city led me to an old man. When I requested the key, he refused. I explained that Baba Sali had sent me, but he remained steadfast in his decision not to give me the key.

"It was then that the old man told me how a number of people had lost their lives in the synagogue. 'I will not give the key to anyone', he declared. 'It would be as if I am taking a life.' I begged and pleaded with the man and said that I could not return to the Rav without the key. After a while, he reluctantly consented. Both Baba Sali and the key had to be bound to the rope in order to be retrieved afterwards, he said, sure that the outcome would be tragic.

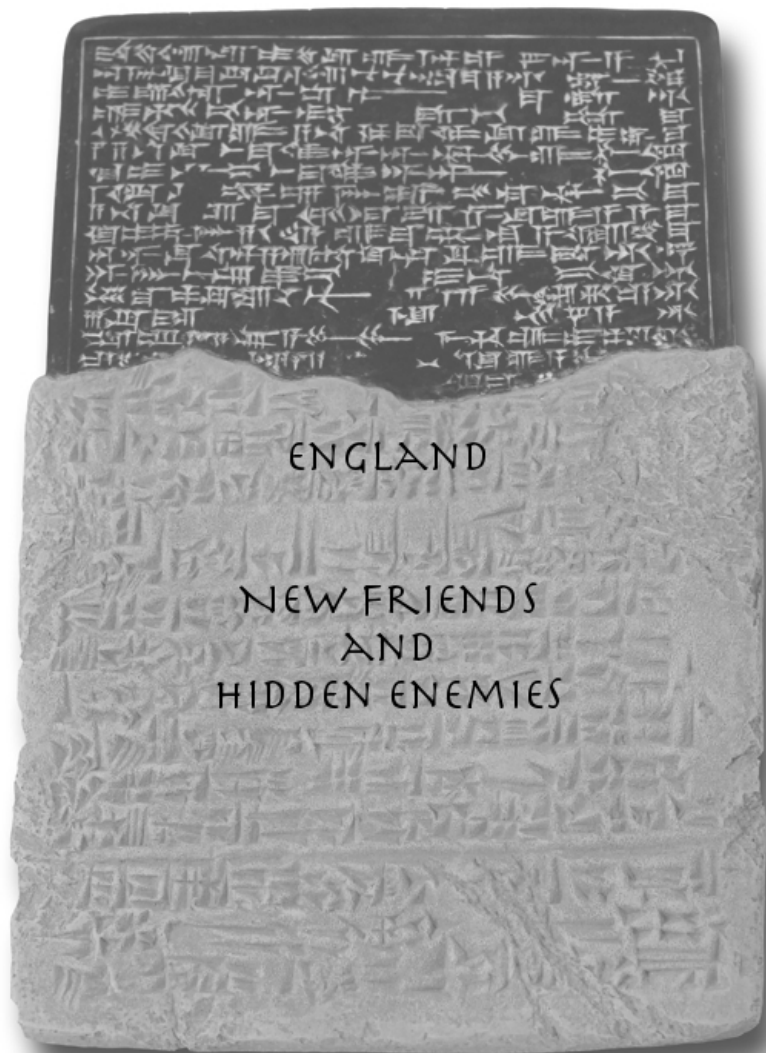
"He accompanied me to the synagogue, and I gave Rav Yisrael (Baba Sali) the key. The old man sat on a large rock nearby, trembling in anticipation of the coming tragedy. Baba Sali instructed me to hold on to his garment and enter the synagogue with him. After we passed through the first set of gates, we entered the synagogue's courtyard.

"Baba Sali walked to the right side of the courtyard, and then entered the synagogue, imbued with deep religious fervour. When he opened the door, a bright light filled his face, a light shining from within the room. Although it was close to twilight, bright daylight filled the room! The Rav then pushed aside the curtain in front of the Holy Ark, unfastened the door and opened a Torah scroll. For several minutes he read from it.

"Afterwards we sat down on one of the benches in the synagogue. Baba Sali turned to me and said, 'You can now let go of my garment.' When we walked through the

gates, the old man ran to Baba Sali and embraced and kissed him, speechless with joy.

"This visit became the talk of the city, and thousands flocked to the synagogue of the holy Ari after the Rav opened the doors."



ENGLAND

NEW FRIENDS
AND
HIDDEN ENEMIES

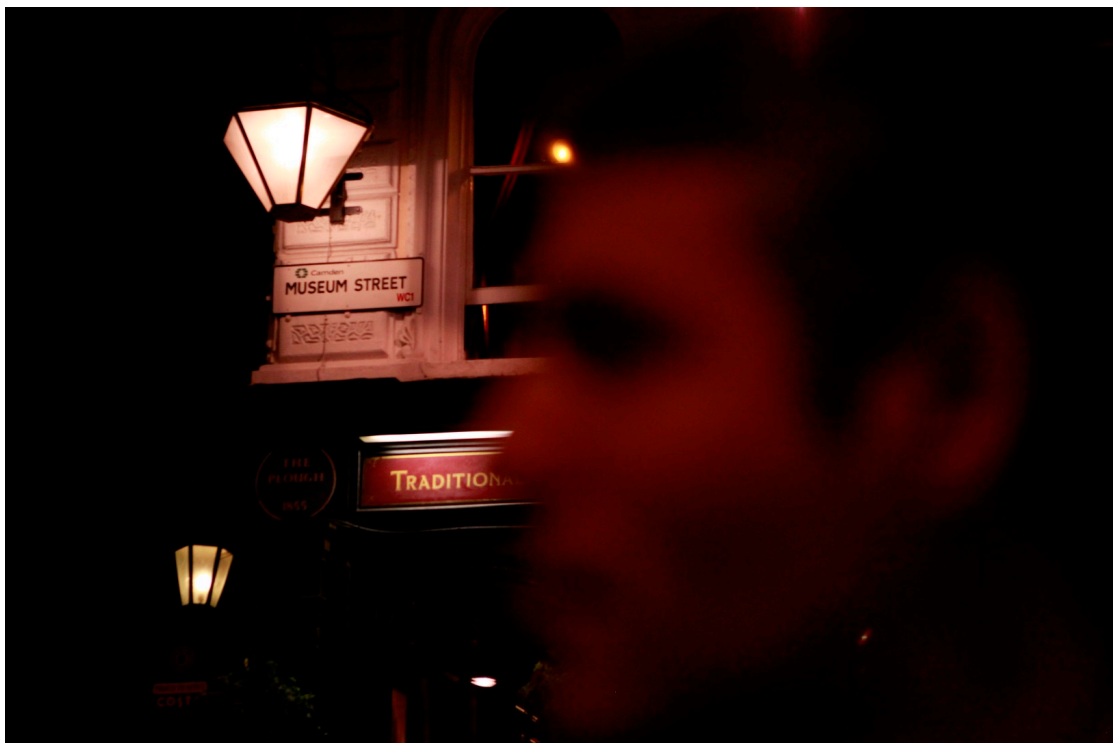
London – Visual Impressions



Maida Vale, Little Venice | © Anne-Sophie Reinhardt



Bloomsbury, Tavistock Square | © Carmen Seaby



Bloomsbury, Museum Street | © Anne-Sophie Reinhardt



The British Museum | © Anne-Sophie Reinhardt



The British Museum © Anne-Sophie Reinhardt



Maida Vale, Bloomf ield road | © Anne-Sophie Reinhardt

Introduction to the Cambridge University Library: The Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit



Cambridge, The University Library | © Nick Thompson

(by the Genizah Unit 2009-2012 Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DR)

The Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection is a window on the medieval world. Its 190,000 manuscript fragments, mainly in Hebrew, Judaeo-Arabic and Arabic, are an unparalleled resource for the academic study of Judaism, Jewish history and the wider economic and social history of the Mediterranean and Near East in the Middle Ages. They shed light on the mundane as well as the religious and cultural activities of that world, since the Collection preserves a huge number of personal letters, legal deeds and other documents, alongside literary and sacred texts. The manuscripts were recovered from the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat, Old Cairo, in 1897-8 by the Cambridge scholar Dr Solomon Schechter. In the 1970s Cambridge University Library established the Genizah Research Unit to carry out a comprehensive program of conservation, cataloguing and research on the manuscripts, which is leading to all manner of important discoveries about Jewish religious, communal and personal life, Hebrew and Arabic literary traditions, and relations between Muslims, Jews and Christians from as early as the ninth and tenth centuries CE. The Genizah Research Unit relies upon external support for its projects.

Link <http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Taylor-Schechter/index.html>

Hildersham, Church of the Holy Trinity



© Simon Knott



THAILAND

THE WRATH
OF THE
DEEP BLUE SEA

A Tsunami Survivor's Story

by Chris Burke '00

I have been thinking lately that I'm the luckiest guy on the planet. In 1999 I dealt with the chilling threat of cancer; in 2001 I was in Manhattan during the tragic terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and escaped injury. In November I negotiated 10-foot swells on the open ocean in a sea kayak in Palau and had to be rescued – and in December I survived the Boxing Day tsunami in Southeast Asia. At least I can say that my life isn't boring.

Dec. 26 started as a great day, though I woke up with a slight hangover from Christmas celebrations. I was getting ready to leave the island of Ko Phi Phi, Thailand, the following day so I had a few details to take care of, such as paying bills and having laundry done. After making those arrangements, I was packing my daypack for a day at the beach.

The time was about 10:15 a.m. As I stepped outside my bungalow, I heard people screaming to my right and saw them running towards me with a rush of water about 1.5 meters (about four feet) high coming after them. For an instant I thought this looked like a movie I've seen. Then I was thinking, "I should get to higher ground." A couple and I found a house with a balcony about six feet off the ground and we ran up there, thinking it would be high enough.

Then I heard more screams coming from my left. I looked in that direction and swore to myself as I saw a wave about 20 feet high rushing towards us. "Maybe this balcony will hold us," I thought. The wave had everything in it ... from people, to homes, to roofs, to chairs. You name it, if it was on the island it was caught in the wave. Then it hit us with the force of a Mack truck.

The water pinned us between the railing and under a metal awning that had been covering the balcony. We remained underwater for about 20 seconds. A thought came that I had better do something or I might not be around much longer. I reached up and grabbed an exposed edge of the awning and pulled as hard as I could. It actually started to break free of the house. We all got our heads above the water and breathed in the air. But since we were still pinned, I pulled the awning with every ounce of energy I had and it broke free. Keep in mind, the time from when I first heard people screaming to this point was maybe 35 seconds.

Then the three of us were swept out to sea. My companions were wearing their large travel packs, I assume because they were going to catch a ferry off the island. I think the weight of their packs pulled the girl under the water, and he went after her. I then looked to see what else was in our paths. A big palm tree with debris collected at its base was calling our names. I looked back and the two people were gone.

I still had to worry about the palm tree. I was almost pinned by the debris it collected, but was able to negotiate my way around it and ended up 150 meters, or a little over a football field's length, out to sea. I was sort of in shock at this point. I had to find a boat, and fortunately there was one nearby. I started swimming towards it. The people aboard threw me a rope. In disbelief and shock over what had just happened, I thought of my family. This, I knew, was going to be a long day.

There were several other people on the boat, including a Thai couple that was missing a child and a Japanese gentleman who was missing his wife. I noticed another survivor had a bad laceration on his calf, and I then noticed I had a bad laceration on my right ankle. We were able to find a few first aid supplies and I treated us both. Meanwhile, I told the captain that I had medical training and wanted to get back on land.

Throughout the next two hours, and for the rest of the day, my emotions were like a roller coaster. My thoughts would rotate between family and loved ones, to all the dead people I knew were on the island, to what I could do to help. I felt helpless just sitting on the boat, but I knew the water was too dangerous to get back on land at this point. We were all scanning the debris on the water for survivors and bodies.

After the water settled down, I asked the captain to bring me back to the pier, which he reluctantly did. I then went to work at the Ko Phi Phi hotel, one of two buildings still standing, evaluating patients and rounding up supplies.

At the hotel there were dead bodies all over the place. The injured were screaming, sobbing, and crying. People were laid out with crush injuries, huge lacerations with bone exposed, people who had lost large amounts of blood, fractures, head injuries, people in shock and many other injuries associated with such a disaster. As bad as the scene was, no one knew the enormity of the situation, and we wouldn't until days later. I had recruited a few people to help me gather supplies and asked others to find out who was injured and to lead me to them. I was working at the hotel for several hours with Thai military helicopters coming and going with supplies and evacuees. Later I headed for higher ground and helped a group of injured people there when rumors of another wave spread.

When no new wave came, I joined a triage center set up by other volunteers near the helicopter site. We didn't have many supplies, but we did what we could. I was working with a psychiatry resident from London named Cici Romain. A Swede named Erik Liungman was organizing the logistics of our efforts, while Cici, myself, and a former nurse/emergency medical technician named Ricardo were doing the majority of the evaluations and treatment. Later a Canadian physician, Nelson Ames, came and assisted. I was shaken to learn his 21-year-old daughter and her boyfriend were missing and presumed dead.

The injuries people sustained were very bad and in some cases life threatening. By looking at someone for five seconds you could see the amount of physical and emotional pain they were experiencing, but there's only so much you can do. Just holding their hand can make the biggest difference. There are a few patients who stand out, including a guy named Nick, whom I saw earlier in the day at the hotel. He was obviously scared for his life because he was having difficulty breathing as a result of fractured ribs and a punctured lung or two. I held his hand and we both started crying; we didn't have to say a word. He was flown out; I hope he made it.

Despite all of the injuries and people crying in pain, my reaction to the disaster at that point was focused on helping. I didn't have time to be upset. As the night wore on, critical patients kept arriving; it seemed like the stream would never end. We were so overwhelmed, but we just kept working and doing the best we could with the limited medicine, food, and water we had. We had a decent system in place and we evacuated as many patients as we could as quickly as possible.

Eventually it was discovered my foot laceration was pretty bad, and Cici made the decision that I would go on the helicopter if there was room. Part of me was relieved, but part of me wanted to stay to help. However, I knew my foot needed treatment quickly to prevent the infection that was surely started. After some people who had been pulled from the rubble were loaded on board, I was given the final approval for a seat on the helicopter.

The helicopter flight took about 35 minutes to Krabi, Thailand. I gazed out of the window and thought of what I just went through. It seemed so surreal; it still does.

When we landed I was amazed how efficient the triage system was on the landing pad in Krabi and at the hospital. There were receiving teams ready to go and ambulances running. I was put in one with a Chinese gentleman who appeared to have fractured a leg. At the hospital there were people everywhere looking to see if anyone

they knew was in the arriving ambulances. I can't imagine what they must have been thinking, not knowing where their loved ones were, or even if they were still alive.

I was sent to a minor care area in the hospital lobby. Next to me was a German woman I had seen earlier in the day who had sustained back and shoulder injuries. I also saw a dive guide named Mark I met on Christmas Eve. I was afraid to ask him if his colleagues, some of whom I had dived with, were alive. He looked terrible like the rest of us. But I was glad to see a familiar face. He told me about a hotel in town that was putting people up for free. I was seen quickly and the nurses worked on my ankle for about 15 minutes and ended up closing it with a suture, which, as it turned out, was a bad thing to do. A girl named Heidi came up to me and told me she was helping out and offered to call my parents. Upon hearing this I burst into tears just knowing that they would soon find out that I was OK. After about an hour I was discharged with a few prescriptions and I went in search of the hotel. A Thai girl who spoke a bit of English came up to me. I told her where I was trying to go and that I didn't have any money for a taxi, and she volunteered to take me there. I'm glad she did because it was about 2 km away. I thanked her profusely with hugs.

The hotel staff was waiting up for people and they sorted me out. I was able to make a very emotional call to my parents. It was so good to hear their voices. Now I could think about how to get home. I had scanned my passport before I left (and I felt like the smartest guy in the world for doing so) and asked my parents to e-mail it to me at the hotel. I was told that Thai Air was flying victims for free to Bangkok, where I knew I would have better and faster luck obtaining a passport and leaving the country. My family had also arranged to get me some money and a place to stay there. The airport was a chaotic mess, with everyone basically crowding the counter and trying to get out. They had a disorganized waiting list and I put my name there. After a few hours, I was able to buy a ticket and get on a 5 p.m. plane to Bangkok. While waiting for a taxi at the Bangkok airport I talked with the U.S. Embassy staff and made a plan for the following day. I eventually arrived at the hotel, but I was very sick at this point because my infected ankle was causing more systemic responses. I was not in good shape. I ordered room service, took a shower, and tried unsuccessfully to sleep.

The next morning I went to the embassy and within a few hours I had a new passport. So many people at the embassy saw that I was in bad shape and were willing to help me with whatever I needed, even buying me lunch. I felt lucky because a lot of people didn't have the assistance I had. There were people who like me, lost everything. I gave people money for their passport photographs, which otherwise would have been difficult to obtain.

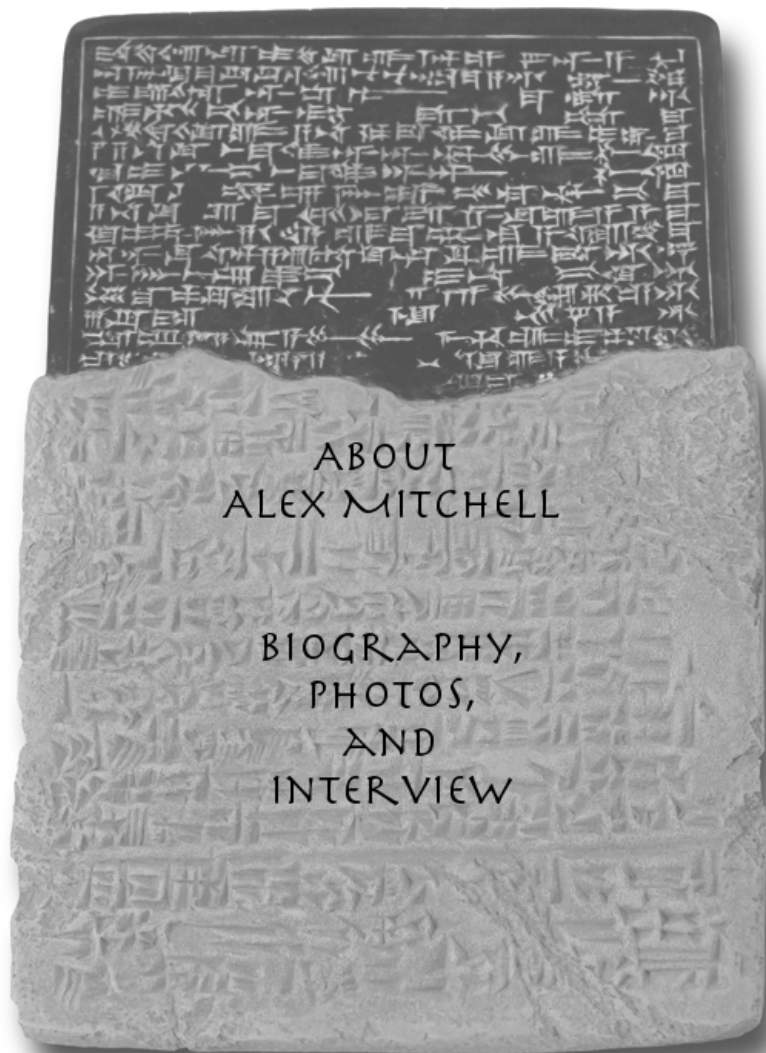
After I got my passport I went shopping for some clothes and shoes, the latter quite a chore since not many people in Asia have size 12 feet. I eventually found a cheap pair of flip-flops that worked. I was so relieved that I was going home the next day. It is hard to explain that feeling and was also hard to keep my emotions under control. I found myself on the verge of tears most of the morning.

The next stop that day was the hospital to check on my ankle. The ER doctor showed me the wound and it looked terrible. I was glad I made the decision to go there instead of waiting until I was back in Portland, Ore. They thoroughly cleaned my ankle and I went back to the hotel to relax. The flight home was long, but fortunately uneventful. I had survived again, leaving me with this thought . . . again: seize the day and live your life to the fullest. Be passionate about what you do because you never know when it's going to end.

Editor's Note: Chris Burke '00 wrote this shortly after surviving the December tsunami. He currently lives in Sydney, Australia where he is a medical student at the

University of Sydney, School of Medicine. Burke estimates he worked on about 300 patients in the aftermath of the tsunami. The fate of the couple on the balcony is still unknown, but the daughter of Canadian physician Nelson Ames and the daughter's boyfriend were found alive. Burke reports physical injuries have healed but he was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of his experiences and is receiving therapy.

*Credits to the publisher of The Pacific Magazine
http://www.pacificu.edu/magazine_archives/2010/spring/index.cfm*



ABOUT
ALEX MITCHELL

BIOGRAPHY,
PHOTOS,
AND
INTERVIEW

Biography

Alex Mitchell was born in Oxford in 1974 to a French mother and British father. He grew up in a small town in the Flanders and in Brussels. He studied Archaeology and Art History at Strasbourg University piling on courses in Latin, Greek, Classical archaeology, Medieval art history, Mesopotamian art and Persian poetry. Having completed his Masters degree in Classical archaeology in Strasbourg, he returned to Oxford in 1999 to study for his doctorate in ancient Greek at the University of Oxford, from which he obtained a D.Phil in Classical Archaeology.

His main interests include popular visual culture and the study of humour from antiquity to the present day. He has coined the term “Archaeology of Humour”, a concept that underlies most of his research projects. He has published scholarly papers in international journals and gives regular talks in various countries in his field of research. His first book, *Greek Vase Painting and the Origins of Visual Humour*, was published by Cambridge University Press, New York, in 2009.

Alex's current research focuses on Classical Greek and Roman reception in editorial cartoons since the turn of the 20th century published in British and American - as well as a large selection of European - newspapers.

Currently Alex is an Honorary Associated Researcher at the Institute of Archaeology in Oxford, Brussels and Fribourg. He considers his work as an Archaeologist very much as a labour of love and also works as a freelancing translator as well as a lecturer-tour guide.

The 13th Tablet is Alex Mitchell's first novel in a trilogy of Mina Osman Thrillers published by Haus Publishing.

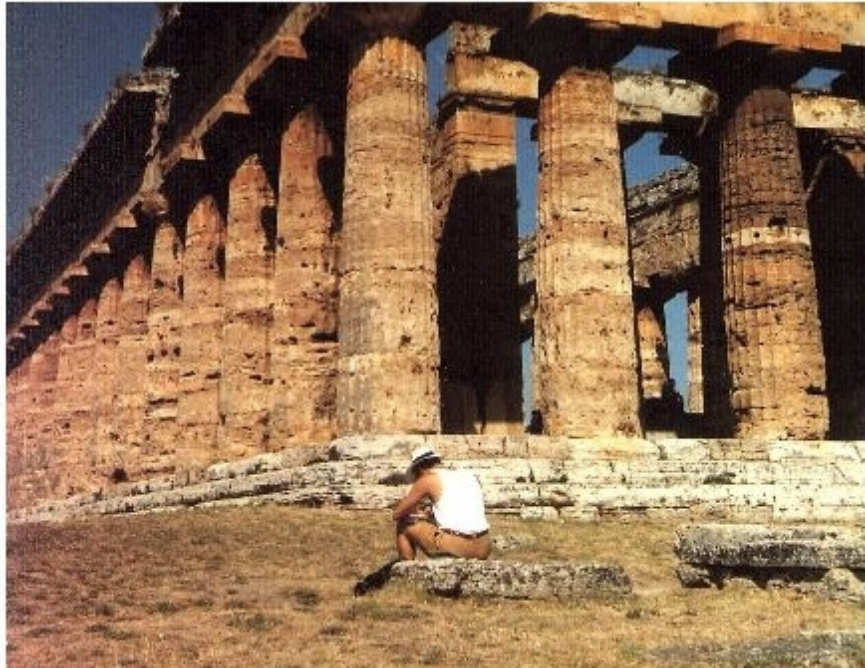
To find out more about Alex Mitchell and his academic work please visit his website:
<http://www.alexmitchell.net/>

Contact Alex Mitchell via:

<http://www.facebook.com/alexmitchellauthor>

Picture Gallery



















Motivation for Writing *The 13th Tablet*

An Interview with Alex Mitchell

Haus: How would you describe yourself? Tell us about some of your experiences.

Alex: My mind is never at rest. Call me curious or eclectic, but I certainly don't fit the image of the ivory tower scholar. During my studies I travelled extensively throughout Greece and Italy, and worked a couple of seasons at archaeological excavations in Greek Macedonia. I did all sorts of odd jobs to support myself – I worked as a night porter in Oxford, a barman in Notting Hill, a factory worker in Strasbourg... After I graduated I continued to travel and work in different places including the US, North Africa, various Middle-Eastern countries and India.

Haus: What principals define the basis of your academic research?

Alex: Every subject I have researched as an academic has been with one question in mind: 'how relevant is it today?' Over and over again I would ask myself how I could share all this fascinating knowledge with non-experts, and how to unravel some of the complexities of the modern world and its continuous flow of information with the help of our ancestral and classical past.

Haus: How did you come up with the idea of writing a novel?

Alex: In 2009, I was walking with my brother Benjamin in the eerie Brompton Cemetery in London. We were quite taken in by the mysterious Victorian monuments that surrounded us. At that moment my brother asked me why I had never thought of merging my passion for literature and my academic research.

I'd written poetry and short stories before. I won a poetry competition at the age of 17 and my poem was displayed in Brussels's tube stations (Metro-poème). Later I wrote a screenplay to experiment with characters.

My brother's question triggered a desire in me to experiment with prose. Since I had written a PhD thesis of 100,000 words, surely I could write a novel? I had been toying with ideas about the primordial flood and universal myths related to the birth of civilisations for a long time. My mind was full of potential characters.

Haus: What finally compelled you to write *The 13th Tablet*?

Alex: I started writing *The 13th Tablet* the morning after the walk at the cemetery, and soon realised it would become a trilogy. What compelled me to write was both my brother's words and my decision to connect my urge for storytelling with a deep-rooted need to share academic knowledge with my contemporaries. Once I started researching, I realised this was not dissimilar to my usual work: reading in six or seven ancient/modern languages about various scholarly issues, etc... When I finished planning the book, I could not stop writing.

Haus: How did the book take its present shape? Were there any revelations during the course of writing?

Alex: I spend painstaking amounts of time structuring and planning the story in frightful detail. I also wrote biographies of the various characters before writing the story proper. My surprise was that when I started writing, the structured plan flew out of the window, and I only kept a skeleton. Moreover, characters who were originally secondary took on a much greater importance than I thought they would, for example Professor Almeini, or Natasha Mastrani, Daniel Bamart...

Haus: What writer or writers have had the greatest influence on you?

Alex: I am very eclectic, reading in French, English and Italian. I've been obviously influenced by classical authors such as Homer and Plato, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Molière and Racine, but I enjoy Flaubert, Kafka, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Henry James and Yourcenar as much. In the contemporary thriller genre, there are many successful writers whose works I have enjoyed reading, including Stieg Larsson, James Patterson and Patricia Cornwell and closer to home, Harry Sidebottom with his *Warrior of Rome* series, and David Gibbins.

Haus: What, in your opinion, differentiates *The 13th Tablet* from other thrillers we find in our local bookshops?

Alex: *The 13th Tablet* is a gripping thriller firmly grounded in historical facts. The plot is woven around the passions and pursuits of strong and endearing characters: an idealistic archaeologist, shady art dealers, a disillusioned US soldier and intelligence agent, a ruthless businessman, and enlightened Kabbalists.

Haus: What advice would you give to aspiring writers?

Alex: Write every day... oh yes, and listen to your brother.

Haus: How does it feel to be a thriller author? Any last words?

Alex: It was a lifelong goal. Researching and writing academic papers and books fulfills very different intellectual needs. To all academics out there I'll say this: writing fiction is a little like freeing yourself from footnotes. And to all others, I'll say that writing fiction is hard and blissful at the same time, and enables one to feel free to bring together all sorts of observations and threads of life, make characters blossom into one thrilling narrative. It doesn't get much better than that.

Further Sources of Information

Further reading

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