

Gilgamesh and the biblical Flood—part 1

Murray R. Adamthwaite

From the time that George Smith of the British Museum first recognized the 'Flood tablet' of the *Gilgamesh Epic* the strong tendency of scholarship has been to consign the Flood account in Genesis 6 to 8 to the realm of ancient myth, and also see the Genesis story as having been borrowed and adapted from Gilgamesh. One line of response to this has been to point out the profound differences between the two, and that Genesis is far superior in theology, morality, rationality, and so on. However, the lack of inner coherence, the composite origin, and the essentially mythical worldview of Gilgamesh has not often been pointed out in this connection. Furthermore, for all the dissemination of Gilgamesh in antiquity, it remained—recognizably—the *Gilgamesh Epic*. It is argued here that the oft-alleged 'borrowing' explanation for the undoubted similarities will simply not do.

In a previous article, I discussed the allegation that the author of Genesis 1 borrowed from *Enuma elish*, the so-called Babylonian creation story, and concluded that there was no real relation at all, other than garbled—and generalized—versions of creation finding their way to mythologies about inter-necine conflicts among the gods, and attached thereto.

The present discussion looks at the Babylonian story of the Deluge, as enshrined in the *Gilgamesh Epic*. Here we do find quite a number of fairly close parallels—at least superficially so, and when seen in context with other Ancient Near Eastern literature relating a story of a great Deluge these parallels require explanation. However, some of the rather simplistic 'explanations' proposed by certain scholars will not stand examination, while the all-too-common discussion plays up the similarities, and at the same time glosses over, or even ignores, the profound differences between Genesis and Gilgamesh, not to mention the lack of inner coherence in the Gilgamesh story.

The *Gilgamesh Epic* was first found in the Great Library of Aššurbanipal at Nineveh, but its Flood story segment was not initially noticed. During 1872 George Smith, then an assistant at the British Museum, discovered the Flood story element on a previously unpublished tablet, and gave a public lecture in December of that year, one which caused a sensation. Later, in 1873, Smith went, at the behest of *The Daily Telegraph*, to the Kuyunjik site to seek further tablets with the Mesopotamian Flood story, and duly found a piece of missing text, and what later turned out to be fragments of the *Atrahasis* tale. Many other text portions and fragments of the Gilgamesh Epic have turned up since, including one portion of Tablet VII from Megiddo in Northern Israel, such that we have a substantially complete text, albeit still with several lacunae at various points.¹

Smith's discovery of Tablet XI (figure 1) caused a sensation at the time, since already for some decades on the geological front science had been moving away from commitment to Genesis and catastrophism to long-age uniformitarianism *à la*

Hutton and Lyell. Here now, it seemed, was the perfect pretext to consign the entirety of the early chapters of Genesis, and the Deluge in particular, to the realm of ancient myth. So they did, and sadly many churchmen dutifully followed, or even led the charge.

Literary background

The first thing we need to realize about the Gilgamesh Epic is that it is *not* primarily a story about a great Deluge, but a story of the fear of death and quest for immortality on the part of its hero and central character, Gilgamesh, king of Uruk (biblical Erech). The story of the Flood has, by general consent, been attached to the Epic as a kind of afterthought, in a rather incoherent and unconvincing manner. (See discussion part 2.)

There are four texts in particular from Sumerian lore which stand as the background of the extant Gilgamesh saga, as follows:²

Death of Gilgamesh: relates how Gilgamesh presented gifts to the various deities in the netherworld, and to other dead there present, for all who lay with him. The text seems to indicate how at death a king would take with him his entire entourage, an obvious feature of the royal graves at Ur as found by Woolley in the 1920s.³

Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living: deals with man's anxiety—and especially of Gilgamesh—about death, and relates the adventures of Gilgamesh as he goes in quest of immortality. This includes his battle with the Huwawa-monster (or Humbaba), as in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.⁴

Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld: here Enkidu plays the part of a faithful friend who nevertheless dies at a crucial moment, and then relates how Gilgamesh seeks to know how to enter—and return from—the netherworld, meanwhile describing its conditions. This forms the substance of Tablet XII of Gilgamesh, originally not part of the epic at all.⁵



Figure 1. Tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic (BM ME K3375).

Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld: Here Inanna, the 'Queen of Heaven', descends to the realm of the dead, but she cannot reascend unless she provides a substitute. She eventually finds Dumuzi, whom she consigns to die in the netherworld.⁶

These tales indicate the pessimism regarding death in ancient Mesopotamia (a contrast with Egypt's elaborate philosophy of the afterlife), and the consequent quest for immortality by some means or other. However, from these sources the scribes have welded together the 'canonical' Gilgamesh Epic. One important point is worth noting here in regard to a biblical connection: since we actually possess these literary precursors, we can trace the various adaptations along the line; unlike the JEDP theory of the Pentateuch. In the latter the whole procedure is fundamentally circular, the criteria yielding the hypothetical 'documents' or sources; then turning around to have these sources yield the criteria.⁷

Finally, as to the Flood story component of the epic, Sumerian lore has yielded the *Ziusudra Epic*, which quite clearly forms the background to the Flood story in Gilgamesh, and also *Atrahasis*, another version of the Deluge in Mesopotamian literature (figure 2). These, along with other Mesopotamian Flood stories, are discussed in part 2.

Features of the Gilgamesh story line

We turn now to the Gilgamesh Epic itself: the story line need not detain us in any great detail. The basic point to grasp is that it is occupied with the problem of death and immortality, since it tells the story of how the hero, Gilgamesh, befriends Enkidu, but after many adventures, including his encounter with, and slaying of, the Huwawa-monster, Enkidu dies (at the

end of Tablet VII), a tragedy in Gilgamesh's experience which sets him off on a quest for immortality, as expressed here:

*"Shall I die too? Am I not like Enkidu? I am afraid of death, and so I roam open country. Enkidu my friend whom I love has turned to clay. Am I not like him? Must I lie down too, Never to rise again?"*⁸

From this point he longs to achieve immortality, a quest which leads him through hazards such as the dark mountain pass of Mashu to the shore of the waters of death, where he meets Šiduri. This ale-wife tells him of far-away Ut-napishtim, a man who has achieved immortality, whose very name apparently means, 'he found life'.⁹ The hero determines to visit him, no matter what the difficulties. So Gilgamesh engages the boatman, who ferries him across the sea, to the land of Ut-napishtim.

At Gilgamesh's request, Ut-napishtim proceeds to relate to Gilgamesh how he was granted eternal life by surviving the great Flood. Ut-napishtim, the 'Noah' figure of the story, confides to Gilgamesh how the gods in assembly decided to make a flood to destroy mankind (why is not explained). Meanwhile, Ea overheard the plan by listening through a wall, and informed Ut-napishtim in a dream, whereupon the latter dismantled his house and built a boat. Then came the flood.

After Ut-napishtim had endured the seven days of the flood, plus another seven days being within the boat on Mt Nimush he thrust out all on board, and made a sacrifice:

*"The gods smelled the fragrance,
The gods smelled the pleasant fragrance,
The gods like flies gathered over the sacrificer."*¹⁰

However, Enlil was furious that Ut-napishtim had survived along with the others. Ea, however, is not intimidated, but complains—after the event:

*"How, oh how, could you fail to consult and impose the flood?
Punish the sinner for his sin, punish the criminal for his crime,
But ease off, let the work not cease; be patient, be not*

*Instead of your imposing a flood, let a lion come up and diminish the people"*¹¹

This response only highlights that the flood of Ut-napishtim was in the first instance not for human iniquity in any way. Instead, Ea pleads *ex post facto* that it should have been so, but even then it would have been gross overkill and a miscarriage of justice. However, Enlil then confers immortality on both Ut-napishtim and his wife:

*"Until now Ut-napishtim was mortal, But Ut-napishtim and his woman shall be as we gods are"*¹²

This is really the climax of the Gilgamesh story; but then comes the anticlimax when Ut-napishtim tells Gilgamesh of a plant, possession of which will restore his youth, but, alas, just when he thought it was his a snake came

and silently stole it away. Thus Gilgamesh's long and arduous quest for immortality came to nothing.

At this stage it will be useful to summarize in the following table the differences between the Gilgamesh version of the flood and that of Genesis (see table 1).

However, the similarity–difference outline is but one important issue; there are further problems, not only in comparison with Genesis (table 1), but with the inner coherence of the Gilgamesh Epic itself, as the following discussion will highlight.

A composite and incoherent tale

On the face of it the link between a quest for immortality and a story of survival from a flood does seem rather tenuous. However, we must remember that we are dealing with a culture which did not think in the rational categories and adherence to logic the way we have traditionally done in the West. Oswalt has highlighted this aspect of Babylonian mythology. Speaking of the way mythology blurs any distinction between the one and the many, he observes: “What both of these (i.e. the Hindu and Egyptian mythologies) are saying is that ultimate reality can be one and not-one at the same time.”¹⁴ In other words, the law of non-contradiction does not apply in the mythical worldview.

Again, in observing how continuity of the divine, the human, and nature constitute the essence of myth:

“This reasoning from the given to the divine, which

can only be done on the basis of the assumption of continuity, has a number of implications for the thought patterns involved. First, such concepts as past and future have no real value to the mythmaker. ‘Now’, the present, is all that exists, and thus reality only relates to the present.”¹⁵

Hence, in an epic such as Gilgamesh

“... stories of human heroes may be told, but these heroes are not presented as particular individuals. Rather they are presented as symbols. These heroes have been lifted out of common time and space so that they can become representative of the race or of the aspirations and limitations of the race.”¹⁶

The upshot of all this is that coherence and consistency are not an issue in the mythologies. Gilgamesh therefore becomes a symbol for the human quest for immortality; and the Deluge, being a unique event, likewise represents the impossibility of ever attaining it. The fact that these two different stories are married together, including inconsistencies of detail, is, for the mythologist neither here nor there. This whole approach, argues Oswalt, is utterly at variance with the biblical outlook, and we may add, Western civilization deriving from it.

All this said, however, the lack of coherence both in major elements as well as in the details does betray a composite make-up of the epic, even if the ancients were indifferent to that aspect. Tablet XII especially betrays notable inconsistencies. Hence it is proper to gain an insight

Table 1. Contrast of Gilgamesh and Genesis.

Gilgamesh	Genesis
1. Polytheistic: gods at loggerheads with each other.	1. Monotheistic: one sovereign God in control of all.
2. The flood is decided on by a council of the gods, but Ea dissents.	2. The one God determines on a flood.
3. Ea, acting alone, warns Ut-napishtim in a dream: trickery is involved.	3. God sees Noah as righteous and offers a way of escape.
4. Reason for flood obscure, except that man's noise was irritating the gods (In <i>Atrahasis</i> this is the reason).	4. Reason for flood is divine judgment for human sin and violence.
5. Boat is a cube of 120 cu per side, with 7 decks, an impossibly unstable configuration!	5. Boat is a barge (tēbah), 300 x 50 x 30 cu.—a very stable construction ratio.
6. Flood due to storm and rain.	6. Flood due partly to rain, partly to earth upheavals, and water within.
7. Flood lasts for 7 days and nights; then another 7 resting on Mt Nimush until he disembarks.	7. Flood lasts in all for more than a year.
8. Boat lands on Mt Nimush ¹³ (in the Kurdish mountains).	8. Ark lands among “the mountains of Ararat” (i.e. in Eastern Armenia).
9. Ut-napishtim sends out a dove, swallow, and a raven.	9. Noah sends out a raven, then doves on three occasions at 7-day intervals.
10. Entry into and emergence from the boat at his own discretion.	10. Both entry into and emergence from the ark at divine command.
11. While most of the gods “gather like flies” over the sacrifice, Enlil is angry. Ninurta then appeases Enlil.	11. Noah offers sacrifice of thanksgiving and receives a divine covenant.
12. Enlil grants to Ut-napishtim eternal life.	12. Genesis is not at all about seeking immortality.

into how, and roughly when, the Deluge part of the epic was incorporated into what became the standard form.

After a century or more of analysis in the light of earlier, particularly Sumerian, texts and the *Atrahasis* epic (still somewhat fragmentary), there is a general certainty that a Flood tradition circulated independently in early Mesopotamia. In the immediate circumstance the *Atrahasis* epic forms the background for Gilgamesh, as seen in the following clue from Tablet XI, line 194 (figure 1), where Ea is speaking to Enlil:

“It was not I who disclosed the great god’s secret:

Atrahasis I let see a vision, and thus he learned our secret.

*And now, decide what to do with him.”*¹⁷

Consequent on this, Enlil confers immortality on both Ut-napishtim (!) and his wife. Andrew George comments on this clue:

*“We now know that particular fragment of the Deluge story (i.e. Gilgamesh Tablet XI) is part of a late version of the Poem of Atram-hasis and not a piece of Gilgamesh at all.”*¹⁸

Another point of incoherence in Tablet XI concerns the need for Ut-napishtim to launch his (cubical) craft, as follows:

“[before] the sun set the boat was complete.

... were very arduous:

from front to rear we kept bringing poles for the slipway,

*[until] two-thirds of [the boat had entered the water].”*¹⁹

Previous commentators have seen a problem with the term *gi-ir-MÁ.DÙ.MEŠ* (translated ‘poles’) in line 78, and have understood it variously as ‘road’, ‘gangway’, ‘floor-planks’, and other unlikely suggestions.²⁰ However, the evidence from Assyrian reliefs compels the conclusion that the word denotes poles for rolling heavy objects (e.g. a statue, or in this case a boat), taken continually from the rear and placed at the front. So the term indeed denotes ‘launching poles’.

Why, then, in a great deluge which will sweep away cities, landscape, and all life, does our hero need to ‘launch’ his craft into a river, requiring ‘rolling poles’ for the task? Why does he not wait for the floodwaters to do this as a matter of course, as indeed they did? Consider XI, lines 102–103:

“The god Errakal (Nergal) was uprooting the mooring-poles, Ninurta, passing by, made the weirs overflow.”

The epic gives no explanation of this. However, the Genesis account does not make such a mistake:

“Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth” (Gen.7:17).

There is another incoherence, where Ut-napishtim from his ‘ark’ sends out a sequence of birds: first a dove, then a

swallow, and finally a raven (XI, lines 147–156). Although Ut-napishtim is ‘Atra-hasis’, “the exceedingly wise”, he shows his folly in this sequence: the raven is a carrion bird, which could find debris and rotting material floating on the surface and settle there. Hence sending this one out *after* sending out a dove and a swallow would prove nothing. The sequence in Genesis 8:6–12 is far more coherent and logical. Moreover, from a biblical comparison perspective the swallow (Akk. *sinuntu* [SIM.MUŠEN]) is well known in Palestine: the Hebrew *סוּס* or *סוּס* (Isa. 38:14; Jer. 8:7), and quite likely also *דוּרְדוּר* (Psa. 84:4) refer to this bird, yet Noah did not send out a swallow.²¹

Tablet XII is not an original part of the epic in any way, but essentially an Akkadian translation of part of the Sumerian poem *Bilgames and the Netherworld*,²² and does not sit conformably with the Gilgamesh Epic proper, since in Tablet XII Enkidu is still alive, but descends into the Netherworld and returns. Hence this tablet will remain outside of the discussion.

Did the Hebrew author borrow from Gilgamesh?

This has become the standard critical approach, as seen in a sample of books and articles, but there are numerous and decisive objections to this.

1. Considering that for most critics the Gilgamesh Epic is the exemplar for the alleged Hebrew ‘borrower’, if we consider the epic as a whole, i.e. that it’s basically about the quest for immortality, it is strange, to say the least, that this theme does not somehow occur in the alleged ‘borrowing’



Figure 2. *Atrahasis*, the Mesopotamian version of the Deluge.

- at all. By contrast, the context of Genesis 6–8 is a very different narrative: both the preceding narrative of Genesis 4 and 5, and the succeeding narrative of Genesis 9 to 11 are *event-based* and *genealogy-based*. This is especially so in the narrative of the Flood’s aftermath, with the Table of Nations displaying the dispersion of the various people groups across the early Earth, and the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel. There is not a hint there of anything to do with the issue of immortality—the climax of the Gilgamesh story, nor of any connection of that with the Flood.
2. The differing bird sequences have already been pointed out. The failure of the erstwhile Hebrew ‘borrower’ to include a swallow, a bird well-known in Palestine, is all the more curious when we consider that the Hebrew scribe is supposed to have merely adapted the Babylonian tale to the Palestinian context, as Dalley alleges in the reference to the olive leaf in Gen.7:11.²³ Furthermore, why did he change the order to ‘raven first’ unless he knew that a raven last would achieve nothing? While the latter is possible, it is unlikely given that this whole theory alleges that the Hebrew author was no ornithologist, but merely adapted the Babylonian material *simpliciter*.
 3. The dimensions of Noah’s Ark, 300 x 50 x 30 cubits—opposed to the absurd dimensions of Ut-napishtim’s craft—constitute a very stable ratio, as any naval architect will attest.²⁴ The Israelites were not a seafaring people, nor was shipbuilding their expertise. Solomon built ships, but with the help and input of the highly skilled Phoenician shipmen, and he used their sailors to obtain those materials for his palace, which had to be fetched from distant lands (1 Kings 9:26–28; 2 Chron.8:17–18). Likewise, when Jonah fled from the call to Nineveh he boarded a ship manned by non-Israelite sailors from the Israelite port of Yafo (Jonah 1:3, 9). This being the case, how did the erstwhile Hebrew ‘borrower’ get these Ark measurements so precisely right? Conversely, when we note that the Sumerians and Babylonians were good boat builders and seafarers, how they allowed such an impossible craft—a perfect cube with seven decks—into their own version of the great Deluge almost beggars belief. Certainly this is no source for the Hebrew scribe!
 4. In Gilgamesh there is no apparent reason for the gods sending the Flood at the outset, and there are crudities such as the gods “gathering like flies” over the sacrifice; but in Genesis a high moral tone in that a righteous God displays patience with man, but ultimately sends judgment on a human race filled with violence. Needless to say, the crudities which beset Gilgamesh are entirely lacking in Genesis.
 5. Any borrowing model must explain not only these four points, but also all the major differences, as outlined in the table above, as to motive, background, and expertise—an impossible task, it is here contended.
 6. Finally, but importantly, there is an overarching aspect to this discussion which is often overlooked: that is, the difference in world-view which each story represents. The Mesopotamian story reflects the world-view of continuity whereby the worlds of humanity, nature, and the divine have no definite borders and so interact with each other. As Oswalt puts it:

“There is a community of essence among the various elements, and each segment partakes of the other two. So gods are humans and natural forces; nature is divine and divinity has human-like characteristics; humanity is divine and is one with nature.”²⁵

 Hence Gilgamesh, as two-thirds god and one third man²⁶, along with the various gods and goddesses who permeate the story, interacting with man and vice-versa, plus the Huwawa monster: all these and more express quite clearly an essentially mythological world-view. The world-view of the Bible, by contrast, is that of transcendence; i.e. the world order and nature is not God, but instead, God is other than, and not bound by, the world and man. Moreover, this outlook gives rise to the idea of history, the superintending Providence of a Supreme God over the affairs of men and events in our space-time world, and directing them towards a goal. We see this in the covenant which God promised to Noah before the Flood and confirmed afterwards (Gen. 6:18; 8:21–9:17 resp., a theme entirely absent from Gilgamesh), and in the dispersal of the various nations after the Flood, and thereby onwards to the call of Abraham and the covenant promise of blessing to the nations (Gen.12:1–13). This is quite opposite to the mythological outlook, whether of Enuma elish, The Gilgamesh Epic, or any of the other items of Mesopotamian literature.²⁷ Furthermore, in Gilgamesh the outcome of the story relates to his own present circumstances, i.e. his mortality. It has nothing to do with the onward march of history.

Seen in this light, our erstwhile Hebrew ‘borrower’ had much more on his plate than the glib and superficial analyses of modern scholars would have us believe. It was much more than taking Gilgamesh and making some adaptations here, incorporations there, etc., and voilà, the Genesis story of Noah! The task required a wholesale restructuring of the whole genre of the narrative to reflect a completely different worldview and outlook.

 Hence, on examination, we are forced to conclude that the ‘borrowing’ explanation completely lacks plausibility. There is indeed a superficial similarity in points of detail, but over all two very different narratives, with two very different sets of theological assumptions and foundations, two different worldviews, and a very different character to each narrative, all combine to force the conclusion that Genesis has no underlying relation at all to Gilgamesh. Superficial similarities do not prove literary dependence.²⁸

Finally, there is the question of date. The main texts we have come from the 17th century, but these are clearly copies of earlier texts. The main body of Epic—without the Flood story—is one issue, while the incorporation of the Flood story is another. According to George, the *Atrahasis* version of the story of the Flood (see part 2) provided the source and model for the Gilgamesh poet to incorporate into his own epic, estimated to have been done around the mid-18th century BC.²⁹ For Dalley and others the Gilgamesh epic proper (minus the Flood component) was compiled from earlier epics (as explained above) c.1800 BC—possibly earlier, while the Flood story was incorporated later, possibly during the early Kassite period of Babylon, c. 14th century BC.³⁰ We may conjecture that the Flood component was incorporated into the main epic somewhere in the mid-second millennium BC.

Conclusion

A sequel article will examine other Flood literature from Mesopotamia, some of it well known, and one small tablet less so. These together lead to the conclusion that a Flood tradition similar to that in Genesis originally circulated in Mesopotamia. Just as apparent, however, is that it was quickly corrupted, garbled, and couched in Mesopotamian polytheism, and later incorporated into a larger narrative (*Atrahasis*), and in particular into the larger, quite separate story of a quest for immortality as we have in the *Gilgamesh Epic*.

References

1. For a critical cuneiform text and transliteration, see Parpola, S., *The Gilgamesh Epic*, SAACT, vol. 1, 1997. However, the definitive critical text with extensive discussion is now that of George, A., *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts*, Oxford University Press, 2003. For recent translations, see Dalley, S., *Myths from Mesopotamia*, Oxford, 1988; and George, A., *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Penguin Books, London, 1999. Dalley's version is the one normally used here, save for when I offer either my own alternative rendering, or that of Andrew George. The version by Heidel, A., *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, University of Chicago, 1949, is now dated from a textual viewpoint, but his discussion remains highly relevant.
2. Walton, J.H., *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 22, 1989. In addition, Walton includes as background the myth *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*. However, since this text is only fragmentary, I have bypassed it in this discussion.
3. Kramer, S.N., *The Sumerians*, University of Chicago, pp. 130–132, 1963.
4. Kramer, ref. 3, pp. 190–197.
5. Kramer, ref. 3, pp. 197–205.
6. Kramer, ref. 3, pp. 153–155.
7. A discussion of the Documentary Theory of the Pentateuch is outside the scope of the present discussion, but this point has been made quite often in the standard literature, both from a conservative Christian and conservative Jewish standpoint. See for example Allis, O.T., *The Five Books of Moses*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1943, repr.1974; Cassuto, U., *The Documentary Hypothesis*, Tr. Israel Abrahams, Jerusalem, 1941, repr. Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1983.
8. Tablet IX, column 1, lines 3–5; Tablet IX, column 2, lines16–17.
9. Andrew George discusses at some length the meaning of the name UD–ZĪ, which derives from the Sumerian Ziusudra. Finally he concludes the name as Ūta–napišti: “I found my life”, and compares similar names from the Old Babylonian period, e.g. Ūta–abi, Ūta–beġi, etc. See George, ref. 1 (2003), vol. 1, pp. 152–155. However, Ut–napištim has become conventional, so I have retained this rendering.
10. Tablet XI, lines159–161.
11. Tablet XI, lines181–186.

12. Tablet XI, lines 201–202. The Akkadian reads:
i–na pa–na 'ut–ZĪ a–me–lu–tūm–ma
e–nin–na–ma 'ut–ZĪ u MĪ–šū lu–u e–mu–ú ki–i DINGIR.MEŠ na–ši–ma.
13. Oswalt, J.N., *The Bible among the Myths*, Zondervan, Rapids, MI, p. 52, 2009.
14. Oswalt, ref. 13, p. 50.
15. Oswalt, ref. 13, p. 43.
16. George, ref. 1 (2003), p. 95, rendering Tablet XI, lines 196–198. See also Tablet XI, line 49 for another mention of *Atrahasis*.
17. George, ref. 1 (1999), p. xxx.
18. George, ref. 1 (1999), p. 91, Tablet XI, lines 76–80. The Akkadian of lines 77–80 reads:
[xxxxx] šup–šu–qu–ma
gi–ir–MĀ.DŪ.MEŠ uš–tab–ba–lu e–liš u šap–liš
[xxxxxxx]–li–ku šī–ni–pat–su
[xxxxxxx e]–še–en–ši (Parpola, ref. 1, p. 110).
19. George, ref. 1 (2003), vol. I, p. 708 transliterates line 79 as gi–ir tarkullī (MĀ.MUG)^{MEŠ} nit–tab–ba–lu e–liš u šap–liš: “Poles for the slipway we kept moving from back to front ...”. George is confident that the Sumerogram MĀ.MUG is to be read here, rather than MĀ.DU, although DŪ and MUG are very similar. tarkullī denotes a wooden pole, and gir tarkullī a slipway of poles.
20. Gurney, O.R., in *Revue d'Assyriologie* 73:89–90, 1979. Note also that Gurney reads it in line 78, instead of uš (following Haupt), making the verb it–tab–ba–lu: “they kept carrying” (Gtn pret. of wabālu). In Parpola, ref. 1, p. 58 the sign is definitely UŠ. Meanwhile, George, ref. 1 (2003), vol. II, p. 883, disagrees with Gurney, reading the initial sign as indeed UŠ, but transliterating it here as nit, whereas Gurney's reading it he regards as implausible. Either way, the Gtn construction of the verb remains firm. Accordingly, I have followed George here, having regard to his extensive discussion.
21. For further discussion, see Heidel, ref. 1, pp. 251–253.
22. George, ref. 1 (2003), vol. I, p. 18. Discussed further in pp. 47–54.
23. Dalley, ref. 1, p. 6, rather glibly concludes that because Genesis 7:11 mentions an olive leaf, it is therefore a Palestinian adaptation of a Babylonian ‘folk tale’, since “olive trees do not grow in Mesopotamia”.
24. See the discussion by Hong, S.W. et al., Safety Investigation of Noah's Ark in a Seaway, *J. Creation* (formerly *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal*) 8:26–35, 1994; www.worldwideflood.com/ark/safety_aig/safety_aig.htm#hull_form_and_characteristics, accessed 24 January 2014.
25. Oswalt, ref. 13, p. 48. Currid makes the same basic point: “The dissimilarities are so great, not only in details but in their very worldviews, that perhaps they are not dependent upon one another or on an earlier common source.” See Currid, J.D., *Against the Gods*, Wheaton, Crossway, 2013, Kindle version, location 1084.
26. Gilgamesh, Tablet I, lines 47–78.
27. Cf. the argument by Oswalt, ref. 13, chap. 6.
28. For an amusing but insightful example of how this sort of procedure can be used to ‘prove’ that two stories are not only closely related to each other but essentially the same story with variations, when in fact they are known to be quite independent of each other, see the YouTube video comparing the images and phrases of *Toy Story* and *The Walking Dead* on www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Dg–KC9xjE, accessed 21 January 2014. ‘Scholarship’ of this sort may appear very erudite and plausible, but be quite fallacious.
29. George, ref. 1 (1999), Introduction, pp. xx–xxi.
30. Dalley, ref. 1, p. 47.

Murray R. Adamthwaite graduated from Melbourne University in 1997 with a Ph.D. in Near Eastern history and languages, and serves as sessional lecturer for the Centre for Classics and Archaeology. He also is Tutor in Old Testament with Tyndale College, Hunters Hill, NSW