

SUSAN TOMORY - SUMERIAN ROOTS OF THE BIBLE

Professor Samuel Noah Kramer has long been acknowledged as an authority on the Sumerians. He is Curator of the Tablet collection and Clark Professor of Assyriology, University Museum, University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *History Begins at Sumer* and *Sumerian Mythology* and the editor of *The Mythologies of the Ancient World*. In 1963 the University of Chicago Press published *The Sumerians* which deals with the origin of the name *Sumer* and the Sumerian roots of many parts of the Bible.

His conclusions concerning the name *Sumer* are important and lean toward the conclusions of his one time professor Poebel – which are generally neglected by Biblical scholars. Professor Kramer's conclusions, of which I am presenting only short captions, can be found in his book *The Sumerians* under the mentioned page numbers.

On page 298, he discusses the origin of the name *Sumer*, or as he prefers, *Shumer*; since it is this form in which it appears in the cuneiform texts. He mentions that Poebel was struck by the similarity between the name *Shumer* and the name of Noah's eldest son *Shem*[\[1\]](#). After linguistic discussions Professor Kramer comes to the conclusion that *Shem*'s name is not the only one, borrowed by the Hebrews from the Sumerians, without the ending consonant. He brings to our attention that the birthplace of Abraham is mentioned as Ur in the Bible, even though the Sumerian form was not *Ur*, but *Urim*. In this, and other similar instances, the Hebrews borrowed the name as the Sumerians pronounced it.

If Poebel's conclusion is correct and *Shem* is identical to the name *Shumer* (Sumer) we have to suppose that the authors of the Bible, or at least some of them, believed that the Sumerians were the ancestors of the Hebrews. ***Linguistically speaking they could not be more wrong***, says Professor Kramer, ***since the Sumerian is an agglutinative language and has no connection with the prepositional Semitic language families, of which the Hebrew is a part***.

There may have been significant Sumerian blood in the ancestors of Abraham, who lived through several generations in Ur or some other Sumerian cities. There is no reason to doubt that the Sumerian spiritual and cultural values were absorbed by these proto-Hebrews, who incorporated several of the Sumerian customs into their daily lives. In other words: The Sumerian-Hebrew connections must have been once much closer than we have this far imagined, and many of the roots of the Law which started out from Zion (Isaiah 2:2) originated in Sumerian soil.

On page 292, he gives voice to his belief that Abraham and the members of his family brought Sumerian customs with them into Palestine which later became part and parcel of the Hebrew traditions and these were also used by the compilers of the Biblical books.[\[2\]](#)

Regardless of how these Sumerian correspondences reached the Hebrew culture many of them bear all the telltale signs of Sumerian origins:

Creation of the World.

Professor Kramer mentions that, according to Sumerian lore, one ancient World-Sea was present before creation. They believed in a unified Heaven and Earth, which were born out of this Sea and it was Enlil who separated the Heavens from the Earth. The same role was given in the Bible to *Ruach-Elohim*.

I have to mention that in the Magyar language there are several expressions meaning the “sky”, among which the expression “Az ég tengere” (the Ocean of Heaven) is still very much in use.

The Tools of Creation.

Both the Biblical writers and the Sumerians believed in a two-fold creation. One came about at the verbal order of God, the other creation was accomplished „manually”. In both instances a lot of planning preceded the happenings.

Paradise.

Professor Kramer mentions that there are no Sumerian parallels to the Biblical Garden of Eden^[3]. Even so, there are several images reminiscent of a paradisaical life and these are important for the sake of comparison. One among them explains the Biblical motif of Adam’s rib (Genesis I. 2:21-23) which Professor Kramer believes originated in a word play between the two words „rib” and „to make live” and that the end result of these may be understood as „*The Lady of the rib*” and also „*The Lady who makes live*”. According to the Professor there is reason to believe that the concept of a Divine Paradise originated in Sumerian lore. (Page 147-149.)

I need to mention that beyond this word play, there is reason to believe that the concept of the “Lady who makes live” originated in more ancient layers. In Magyar lore the bride and later wife of the Sun was *Ilona*. This name means *Mother of Life*. She was mother of air and mother of Earth. The rib motif also speaks of an ancient knowledge that the Earth originated from the side of the Sun with the help of centrifugal forces at play and this was preserved in Magyar mythology.

The Flood.

It is a long discovered fact that the Biblical Flood story has several obvious parallels. It is important to note though that one Mesopotamian tradition speaks of ten pre-flood rulers who lived extremely long lives and remind us of the Bible’s pre-flood Patriarchs, says Professor Kramer.

There is a remarkable saying in the Magyar language of which the linguist and poet Dénes Kiss wrote a study. The saying, translated into English, is the following: „We surely swam through this” (in Magyar: „Ezt megúsztuk!”). It is used when someone has overcome a very difficult obstacle. Mr. Kiss reminds us that this flood must have been immense if it became part of the Magyar vocabulary.

The Cain-Abel Motif.

This is an obviously shortened Sumerian motif, which found its way into the Bible. This story was very popular in Sumerian poetry, says Professor Kramer. (Page 217-23.)

Here we have to mention that the Magyar word upon which the name Cain is based is “kaján” (malicious, malevolent), and this K-J or H-J Magyar word-root is also connected with the concept of bent, crooked (hajlik), and snake (kíjó).

The Tower of Babel and the Dispersion of Mankind.

According to Professor Kramer, the story of the Tower of Babel first came about as an explanation for the origins of the Sumerian Ziggurats. Most of these immense structures were already in ruins and, to the Hebrews, they became the symbols of the transience of human affairs and also the lust for power, which usually brings about humiliation and suffering. For these reasons it is not likely that the Babel-story existed within Sumer since to them the Ziggurats represented a link between Heaven and Earth, God and man.

Looking at it from another point of view, the happy state of the mono-lingual humanity was ended by an angry God. Its Golden Age parallel may be preserved in the Sumerian epic poem in „The Land of Enmerkar and Aratta”.

Further parallels can be found in the book, under the following titles:

The Earth and its Organization

Personal God

Law

Ethics and Morals

Divine Retribution and National Catastrophe

The Plague Motif

Suffering and Submission: The „Job” Motif

Sumerian and Egyptian connections of the Biblical Books.

Excerpt from Susan Tomory's book: *Karácsony* (Christmas).

The One and only begotten Son of the Ancient and Eternal God is Life who is clad in Light. As the Son of God he is the one who fulfills God's wishes of Creation in the Magyar belief system and as we shall see in related cultures also.[\[4\]](#)

In the pages of the Old Testament, in the Book of Daniel (7:9-14), *El* is also honored as "The Old God".[\[5\]](#) This name is also part of the name *Immanuel*, connected with Jesus. In a similar form, it is the name of Isaiah's third son; according to tradition, it was the Book of Isaiah that the twelve-year-old Jesus explained in the temple. An ancient copy of this book emerged from the workshops of the Qumram monks. It is possible that Isaiah himself was a member of this school of wisdom, from which the Book of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the 37th Psalm also originated. The Book of Solomon also came to light, based partly on Sumerian, partly on Egyptian traditions and, like the Book of Job, is of Sumerian origin.

Proverbs 22 is part of Amenemopet's wisdom literature. The following Biblical Creation stories are of Canaanite origin: Psalms 74:13, 89:10, Job 3:8, 41, Isaiah 27:1, 51:9. Amos 9:3, and the following literary books: Psalm 29. and the Song of Songs.

This "School of Wisdom" contains copious amounts of Sumerian and Egyptian literature and it probably began as the center of refuge for the Sumerian schools of wisdom.

A well-known speech of Pope John XXIII's reminds us of these connections. Since I do not have this speech at hand in English translation, I am using my own translation of the Hungarian text:

This speech of Pope John XXIII was given on July 1st, 1962 (Novena Allo Spirito Santo per il Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II), in the edition of a Presidenza General dell Azione Cattolica Italiana Via Conciliazone 1. Roma:

Our seminaries have hardly any subjects on rhetoric and the believers are forced to suffer through the low quality speeches of new priests and their naive, pious stories. Their heads are filled with dogmas and the obsolete and refuted anthropomorphic nationalism of the Old Testament. The poor misguided priests have to sweat to be able to bring out God's universal love and the natural rights given to all people and the Christian Universality. In other words we hold onto false, ancient standards and bar the results of the positive sciences, archaeology, anthropology, geology and the results of the newly found first Sumerian Bible (Ur, 1954 Dr. S. N. Kramer: Paralel Biblia, 1956) which reveals and explains everything clearly. Nobody understands this backward and by now extinct Old Testament based fuss which is none other than the stolen and rewritten fragments of ancient traditions of a

historically vanished people (Sumer, Parthian, Chaldean, Babilonian, Egyptian) and altered history.[6] In other words we are bound by some antiquated Judaism even though we are satisfied with Christ the Son of God...”

REFERENCE

Dictionary of the Bible by James Hastings, Scribner and Sons, 1963

Novena Allo Spirito Santo per il Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II, a Presidenza General dell Azione Cattolica Italiana Via Conciliazone 1. Roma

Karácsony (translation: Christmas) by Susan Tomory Heraldika Publ. 2005 Budapest

[1] Poebel's conclusions concerning the connection between the name Shem and Sumer is also supported by Magyar linguistics and ethnography. Both belong into the Magyar S-M (Sz-M) wordroot system, to which the words *szem* (seed), and *szemérem* (modesty) belong. As we see in the Bible, Shem (Szem) was the only modest (*szemérmes*) son of Noah who covered his father's nakedness. (S.T.)

[2] Hungarian researchers have since come to the realization that the well known stories of the Bible were adopted by Hebrew scholars during the Babylonian captivity.

[3] The linguistic base of the Garden of **Eden** in Magyar are the concepts of sweetness and virginity (*édesség, szűzesség*). By the time this concept reached the Fertile Crescent, it lost the memory of linguistic connections.

[4] Tomory, Susan *Karácsony*, Heraldika Kiadó Budapest, 2005

[5] Élő (meaning the Living) is one of the Magyar names of God.

[6] Sumerian Gilgamesh Epos, Sumerian-Akkadian epic poems, the stories of Enki Ninmak, Atrahasis, the prophecies of the Hindu Puranas; Zarathustra's Zend Avesta, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the spirituality of the Amarna Age, the cult of Amenhotep IV., from the Memphis theology to the works of Ptaphotep, Dzsedefhór, Heti, Hoferi, Amenemope.