



Astronomical Knowledge Before the Deluge

In the Deluge a civilization was destroyed the real value of which is incalculable. Hebrew tradition estimates that the population of the ante-diluvian world “amounted to millions.” Adam is said to have invented seventy languages; Cain, his son, built cities and monuments and ruled over kings. They were representatives of generations. According to Hebrew legends the Deluge and its time had already been predicted by Enoch, and even more ancient generations were said to have erected tablets with calendric and astronomical calculations predicting the catastrophe.⁽¹⁾ This might have been the knowledge of months, of years, and of the periods of comets that the remote generations had acquired.

It was in the celestial harmony and disharmony that the secrets of the upheavals were conceived to lie. The science about the times in which calamity could return and fall on our Earth was cultivated among populations that had a vivid remembrance of days of misfortune or of lucky escape.

It is told about the children of Seth, the son of Adam, that

they were the inventors of that peculiar sort of wisdom which is concerned with the heavenly bodies and their order.

And that their inventions might not be lost before they were sufficiently known, they made two pillars upon Adam’s prediction that the world was to be destroyed at one time by the force of fire and at another time by the violence and quantity of water.

The one was of brick, the other of stone, and they inscribed their discoveries on both, that in case the pillar of brick should be destroyed by the flood, the pillar of stone might remain, and exhibit these discoveries to mankind and also inform them that there was another pillar, of brick, erected by them.⁽²⁾

This means that stelae with calendric and astronomical calculations were made public knowledge in that early age. According to the Aggada it was the pious Enoch (the seventh generation) who achieved the deepest knowledge of the celestial secret. He was the man who “walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”⁽³⁾ In this ascension to heaven was taken away the man who more than any other knew the plan of the world and of its creation. Enoch was a great man of his generation.

Kings and princes, not less than one hundred and thirty in number, assembled about him, and submitted themselves to his dominion, to be taught and guided by him. Peace reigned thus over the whole world for all the two hundred and forty three years during which the influence of Enoch prevailed.

In the story of Enoch’s ascension it is said that he predicted the disaster.

Enoch was carried into the heavens in a fiery chariot drawn by fiery chargers. The day thereafter the kings who had turned back in good time sent messengers to inquire into the fate of

the men who had refused to separate themselves from Enoch, for they had noted the number of them. They found snow and great hailstones upon the spot whence Enoch had risen, and, when they searched beneath, they discovered the bodies of all who had remained behind with Enoch; he alone was not among them: he was high in heaven.

What the Aggada means to tell is that a human being—and one gifted with the greatest “wisdom concerning the heavenly bodies and their order,” was brought away in a fiery storm which killed many, brought snow and meteorites, and which had been predicted by the one who disappeared.

Some exact knowledge of the revolution of the bodies in the sky is ascribed here to the antediluvian generations.

References

1. It is said that the real period of grace endured not for seven days, but for 120 years. During this time the flood was over mankind as a threat. (Sanhedrin 108b)
2. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* II. 8, borrowed by Yashar Bereshit 10a.
3. Genesis 5. 24.

