



# Saturn and the Deluge

Following the rabbinical sources which declare that the Deluge was caused by two comets ejected by the planet Khima, and our interpretation of the planet Khima as Saturn, we begin to understand the astrological texts, such as certain passages in the *Tetrabiblos* of Ptolemy, which attribute to the planet Saturn floods and all catastrophes caused by high water.<sup>(1)</sup>

The planet's presence in Aquarius especially brought expectations of heavy rains and flooding<sup>(2)</sup> as is attested, among others, by the first-century Roman author Lucan.<sup>(3)</sup> Many of the ancient astrologers were in agreement on this point.<sup>(4)</sup> In a work entitled *Speculum astrologiae*, Junctinus ascribes inundations to the action of Saturn's comets.<sup>(5)</sup> Cuneiform texts contain prophecies of a deluge taking place when a comet assumes a direction with its head towards the Earth.<sup>(6)</sup>

Philosophers of antiquity who were not astrologers also expressed their belief that Saturn is in some way related to moisture—among them the pre-Socratics Philolaus and Philodemus,<sup>(7)</sup> and, somewhat later, Plato.<sup>(8)</sup> The elder Pliny wrote in his *Natural History* that it is well known that heavy rains follow transitions of Saturn.<sup>(9)</sup> Servius asserted that “Saturn is a god of rains . . . . When in the sign of Capricorn, he causes very heavy rains, especially in Italy”<sup>(10)</sup> and again: “Saturn is the god of all that is humid and cold.”<sup>(11)</sup> Proclus recorded the beliefs of the Pythagoreans: “Again, in the heavens, Ares is fire, Jupiter air, Kronos water.”<sup>(12)</sup> Nonnos referred to “ancient Kronos, heavy-kneed, pouring rain.”<sup>(13)</sup> Hippolytus wrote of the beliefs of a member of the Peratae sect: “But water, he says, is destruction; nor did the world, he says, perish by any other thing quicker than by water. Water, however . . . they assert (it to be) Cronus.”<sup>(14)</sup> We recognize that the astrological connection between Saturn and catastrophes created by high water has a very ancient origin.

In the Chaldean story of the Deluge, as told by Berossos, Kronos (Saturn) disclosed to the king Xisuthros that a universal flood would begin on the 15th of the month Dasios. Abydenos says: “Kronos announced to Sisithros that a flood would pour from above.”<sup>(15)</sup>

## References

1. *Tetrabiblos* II. 8. 84. Similar statements may be found in Hephaestion I. 20.
2. A. Bouche-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque* (Paris, 1899), p. 96 and n. 1; cf. J. Geffcken, “Eine gnostische Vision,” *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1899), p. 699.
3. Lucan, *Pharsalia*, transl. by R. Graves (London, 1956), Bk. I, 11. 640ff: “It is not as though this were the Watercarrier's month, and the cold and malicious planet Saturn had lighted his dusky fires aloft, thereby raising a truly Deucalionian Flood to overwhelm these lands.”
4. *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* X, 249, 2ff.

5. Junctinus, *Speculum astrologiae* p. 317a. Cf. F. Boll, *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung*, 4th ed. by W. Gundel (Leipzig, 1931), p. 114.
6. “Die Keilschriften propheziern bereits, dass eine Hochflut eintritt, wenn der Komet diese Richtung [mit dem Kopfe nach der Erde] einnimmt. F. Boll, *op. cit.*, p. 114; Cf. Jastrow, *Die Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens* (Giessen, 19??), Vol. II, p. 696, n.1.
7. Cf. Klibansky *et al.*, *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 138, n. 39.
8. *Cratylus* 402b.
9. Pliny, *Natural History* II. 106: “Igitur (sidera) in suo quaeque motu naturam suam exercent, quod manifestum Saturni maxime transitu imbribus faciunt.”
10. Servius, *Commentarii in Virgili Georgicas* I. 336: “Saturnus deus pluviarium est, unde etiam senex fingitur . . . Hic autem in Capricorno facit gravissimas pluvias, praecipue in Italia.”
11. *Ibid.*, I. 12: “Quod Saturnus humoris totius et frigoris deus sit.” Cf. Pauly’s *Realencyclopaedie* XI. 1987-1988, where Kronos is described as representing rivers and water. The ninth-century Arab astrologer Abu Ma’sar wrote: “[Saturn] presides over works of moisture . . . lakes and rivers.” (*Introduction to Astrology*, Bk. IV, quoted in Klibansky *et al.*, *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 130).
12. Proclus Diadochus, *In Timaeo* 32b. [In his commentary to Euclid’s *Geometry* (I. 402. 21), Proclus ascribes a similar conception to the pre-Socratic philosopher Philolaos.]
13. Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* VI, 175-178.
14. Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, Book V, chapter 11 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. V. Hippolytus lived between the years 170 and 236.
15. Cyril, *Contra Julianum* I. 5. Cf. Syncellus, *Chronicon* 28 and Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* IX. 12. Cf. also the account of Alexander Polyhistor in Cyril, *Contra Julianum*, *loc. cit.* [The traditions of the Hindus assign the Deluge to the end of the Satya yuga and to the reign of Satyavrata, who is acknowledged to be Saturn (E. Moor, *The Hindu Pantheon* [1864], p. 108). Cf. Sir W. Jones, “On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India,” *Asiatick Researches* Vol. I (1799), p. 234: “The Satya, or (if we may call it) the Saturnian, age was, in truth, the age of the general flood. . . .” Brahma (i.e., the planet Saturn—see below, section “The Worship of Saturn,” n. 5), is said to have warned Manu of the Deluge soon to engulf the world (*The Mahabharata*, XXXX); and when the waters of the deluge covered the earth, Brahma is described as floating over the expanse of the ocean (*Agneya Purana*, chapter IV; cf. S. Shastri, *The Flood Legend in Sanscrit Literature* [Delhi, 1950], p. 51). An ancient woodcut published by Athanasius Kircher (*China Illustrata* [Amsterdam, 1667], p. 158) portrays Brahma (identifiable by his four faces, or *chatra mukha*) as seated on a rayed disk, apparently Saturn, that hovers over the waters of the Deluge. Cf. F. Maurice, *Indian Antiquities* (London, 1800), Vol. II, opp. p. 352. The woodcut illustrates the third avatar of Vishnu and, more specifically, may be inspired by the words of the *Padma Purana*: “then the lord . . . floated over the vast ocean, void of the sun and the moon. . . .” (Shastri, *The Flood Legend*, p. 41; compare also Psalm 29: “the Lord sitteth upon the flood” ).].

