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**Hebrew *tbh*:
Proposed
Etymologies**

The term תִּבְנָה occurs in the Hebrew bible in but two episodes, the story of the flood,¹ and the story of Moses' birth.² Its usages in these two cases are radically different. In the former, תִּבְנָה denotes a colossal ark,³ while in the latter, the meaning is a receptacle of infant size.⁴ Scholars ancient⁵ and modern⁶ have attempted to solve this difficulty of usage

¹ Gen. 6:14, 15, 16, 18, 19; 7:1, 7, 9, 13, 15, 17, 18, 23; 8:1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 19; 9:10, 18.

² Ex. 2:3, 5.

³ According to A. Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels (Chicago, 1963), 236 [hereafter, Heidel], Noah's ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. It had a displacement of about 43,300 tons.

⁴ The receptacle was large enough for the infant to be placed in it (Ex. 2:3), but small enough for one of the slave girls of Pharaoh's daughter to fetch it (Ex. 2:5).

⁵ E.g. Ibn Ezra on Gen. 6:14: וְשֵׁם תִּבְנָה וְלֹא סְפִינָה כִּי אֵינָהּ "And (its) name is תִּבְנָה and not 'boat' because it didn't have the shape of a boat, nor did it have oars." Implicit in this statement is the notion that the ark was called תִּבְנָה rather than אֵינָה "ship" because it was not a ship, but rather a box-like structure. This would solve the problem by resorting to the late Hebrew usage of the word (see below, note 8). Cf. M. D. Cassuto, Commentary on Genesis, II (Jerusalem, 1965), 41 [in Hebrew], [hereafter, Cassuto].

⁶ E.g. Heidel, 233; Cassuto, 40-42; A. S. Yahuda, The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian (London, 1933), 205, n. 2, 262-265; N. Sarna, Understanding Genesis (New York, 1966), 49; KB, 1017a; BDB, 1061; E. Ben-Yehuda, A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew, VIII (New York, 1960), 7646-7649, [hereafter, Ben-Yehuda].

by resorting in various ways to the late Hebrew usages or an assumed Egyptian etymological origin of תִּבְנָה. It is our intention here to demonstrate that these solutions are untenable, and that the answer must be sought in a completely different direction.

M. D. Cassuto,⁷ expanding on an idea of Ibn Ezra, proposed to solve this difficulty by redefining the term תִּבְנָה in the Hebrew flood story. In his opinion, תִּבְנָה must have signified "an object made in the shape of a parallelepiped."⁸ He further states:

Undoubtedly the Biblical narrative refers to such a structural shape and not to that of a ship. The sentence, "and the ark went [הֵלַךְ] on the face of the waters" (Gen. 7:18) is not suited to a boat, which is navigated by its mariners, but to something that floats on the surface of the waters and moves in accordance with the thrust of the water and wind. Similarly, the subsequent statement (Gen. 8:4): "the ark came to rest...upon the mountains of Ararat," implies an object that can rest upon the ground; this is easy for an ark to do since its bottom is straight and horizontal, but not for a ship.

However, neither the biblical text nor comparative Semitic philology bear out Cassuto's contentions. As for his first objection (Gen. 7:18), the verb הֵלַךְ is used elsewhere for ships not only in biblical Hebrew,¹⁰ but

⁷ Cassuto, 41. Actually, Cassuto first suggests (*ibid.*, 40) that the term תִּבְנָה was used in both stories to stress "the similarity of themes." This suggestion, which is not much different from the one presented in this paper, was unfortunately not backed up by any solid textual or philological evidence, but rather by fanciful Midrashic exegesis.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 41. Translation: I. Abrahams, From Noah to Abraham (Jerusalem, 1964), 60, [hereafter, Abrahams]. Cassuto also brings in the late Hebrew evidence here. In Mishnaic Hebrew, תִּבְנָה may usually be translated "box," "chest," and it is also used to represent the holy ark in the synagogue. See G. H. Dalman, Aramäisch-Neuhebräisch Handwörterbuch (Göttingen, 1938), 441 and Ben-Yehuda, VIII, 7646-7649.

⁹ Cassuto, 41. Translation: Abrahams, 60.

¹⁰ Is. 33:21 (אֲנִיֹּת שֵׁיט); Ps. 104:26 (אֲנִיֹּת) [possibly, however, to be emended]; 2 Chron. 9:21 (אֲנִיֹּת לַמֶּלֶךְ); 2 Chron. 20:36, 37 (אֲנִיֹּת).

in Akkadian as well.¹¹ As for the second objection, while there are no other cases of boats landing in the Hebrew bible, the verb נח "to rest" is very similar in its primary meaning to the basic meaning of Akkadian emēdu - "to lean." Since the latter is the regular term for landing in Akkadian,¹² it stands to reason that נח could be used in the bible for "to land."¹³

The Egyptian cognates usually given¹⁴ as evidence for the alleged Egyptian origin of תבה are ḏb̄t and tbt which are translated "Palast o.a; Schrein, Sarg"¹⁵ and "Kasten"¹⁶ respectively. However, never are either of these words used in Egyptian texts for boats. A. S. Yahuda¹⁷ attempted to resolve this obvious difficulty by reference to the Egyptian substantive dpt "boat," which he connected with ḏb̄t and tbt. However, Egyptologists are not in agreement with Yahuda, and consider dpt to be completely separate in meaning

¹¹ Two examples will suffice here: (1) šumma ištu Kapturi elippašu tallaka "If his ship arrives here from Cyprus" (PRU III, RS 16.238:10-11); (2) kī libbišunu tillakūna elippātušunu u telqūna hišihtašunu "Their ships come at their pleasure, and take what they desire" (EA 126:11-13).

¹² E.g., ana Nišir ĩtemid elippu "The ship landed at Mount Nisir" (Gilg. XI:140).

¹³ H. L. Ginsberg suggests the translation "to run aground" in Gen. 7:18 which certainly fits the context better (oral communication).

¹⁴ תבה was apparently first equated with Egyptian ḏb̄t by H. Brugsch in his Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch, I-VII (Leipzig, 1867-1882). This equation was accepted by A. Erman in his fundamental study, "Das Verhältnis des Aegyptischen zu den Semitischen Sprachen," ZDMG 46 (1892), 123. It has been accepted by biblical scholars ever since (see above, note 6). Note, however, that this equation is conspicuously absent from A. Erman and H. Grapow, Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache, V (Leipzig, 1926-1931), 261, 561, hereafter Wb; A. Ember, Egypto-Semitic Studies (Leipzig, 1930); and T. O. Lambdin, "Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament," JAOS 73 (1953), 145-155, though not specifically denied by these authors. The writer would like to especially thank Professor J. Schmidt for checking all Egyptian matters and permitting me to take up much of his time in consultations.

¹⁵ Wb, V, 561.

¹⁶ Ibid., 261.

¹⁷ Yahuda, 205, n. 3.

from db³t and tbt.¹⁸ The latest solution is that put forward by L. Koehler,¹⁹ who separates Hebrew תבה into two different words meaning "chest" and "palace, ark." For the first,²⁰ the Egyptian db³t in its meaning "coffin, chest" is compared. For the second,²¹ db³t in its meaning "palace" is given. The evidence presented that these are homonyms in Egyptian that coalesced into one Hebrew substantive is twofold: (1) there are separate hieroglyphs for db³t "palace" and db³t "coffin, chest"; (2) db³t "palace" corresponds to תבה in the Hebrew flood story just as the boat in the Akkadian flood story is once called ēkallu "palace."²² There are three objections to this theory. Firstly, it is likely that the two hieroglyphic spellings do not represent homonyms at all, but merely variant spellings of the same word.²³ Secondly, the semantic range of words whose primary

18 Cf. Spiegelberg's reaction to Yahuda's assertion in W. Spiegelberg, Zeitschrift für Semitistik und Verwandte Gebiete 7 (1929), 115: "...ihm [ist] das Missgeschick zugestossen, dass er ...db³t...'Kasten', das bekanntlich im hebr. תבה entlehnt worden ist, und das Wort dp.t 'Schiff', die gar nichts miteinander zu tun haben, zusammen wirft."

19 KB, 1017a.

20 See note 2 for the biblical references.

21 See note 1 for the biblical references.

22 Gilg. XI:95.

23 The difference between the Hieroglyphs of the Egyptian word cognate to Koehler's I תבה (𓄊𓄌𓄐) and those of the Egyptian word cognate to his II תבה (𓄊𓄌𓄑) is the hieroglyph 𓄊 = phonetic b which serves in the former word as a phonetic complement to the trilateral sign 𓄌𓄐 = db³. According to A. Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar (London, 1969), 38[#32], "The complete absence of phonetic complements is uncommon, but is seen in such words as 𓄌𓄐 'thousand,' 𓄌𓄐𓄑 'son,' 𓄌𓄐𓄑𓄌 'servant,' 𓄌𓄐𓄑𓄌𓄐 'work,' 'construction.'" Note, however, that for both 𓄌𓄐 and 𓄌𓄐𓄑, R. Faulkner, A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian (London, 1962), 183, 283, cites variant spellings which include phonetic complements. Furthermore, the fact that both words contain as their major hieroglyph the trilateral sign 𓄌𓄐 = db³ is a clear indication that they both derive from the same root, cf. Gardiner, 45[#42], 440. That they differ from each other in spelling only by a phonetic complement indicates that they are simply variant spellings of the same word.

meaning is "palace" or "house" may include "grave, sarcophagus" in Egyptian,²⁴ Akkadian²⁵ and biblical Hebrew.²⁶ Thirdly, the reference to the boat as ēkallu "palace" in the Akkadian flood story is very suspect²⁷ and has been recently interpreted quite differently.²⁸

Thus, we must look elsewhere for an explanation. Now despite some recent objections,²⁹ it has long been accepted in biblical studies that the Akkadian

²⁴ Compare pr "house," "palace" with pr n nhh "tomb" (literally "house of eternity"). For references, cf. Faulkner, Dictionary, 89. This Egyptian usage is made even more pertinent to the discussion at hand by the fact that Wb, 561 defines dbʿt "als Synonym zu pr-cʿ." Note also that the phrase pr n nhh is exactly equivalent to Hebrew בית עולם. Cf. H. Tawil, "A Note on the Aḥiram Inscription," JANES 3, #1 (1970), 36.

²⁵ In Akkadian, both bītu "house" and ēkallu "palace" are also used for "tomb." Note the following examples: (1) bītu ša ina šilli bīt Marduk bēliya ukinnūma "The tomb which I established in the shade of the temple of Marduk, my lord..." (IAK, 40 #2:5-6); (2) [ša] ina bītīšu lā gebru "[(Sargon) who] was not buried in his tomb..." (Eretz Israel 5 [1958] 154:9 [cf. 155:20]); (3) ēkal šalāli kimah tapšuḫti šubat dārāti "A tomb of sleeping, a grave of repose, a dwelling place of eternity" (OIP II, 151 #14:3); (4) ēkal tapšuḫti šubat dārāt "A tomb of repose, a dwelling place of eternity" (OIP II, 151 #13:2). Note that the last two passages come from inscriptions appearing on bricks from the royal sepulchre at Assur, so that the usage of ēkallu for "tomb" is here beyond any shadow of a doubt. For these two passages and a complete discussion of the phrase בית עולם in both Hebrew and Phoenician, cf. Tawil, Aḥiram, 33-36. For the most recent discussion of this term and the first Nabatean inscription to utilize it, see A. Negev, "A Nabatean Epitaph from Trans-Jordan," IEJ 21, #1 (1971), 50-52 and plate 4.

²⁶ In biblical Hebrew, בית "house" occurs at least once with the meaning "tomb," for example, in Is. 14:18-19: כלם שכנו בנחור איש בנחו "Yet they were all laid in honor, each in his tomb." As first noted by H. L. Ginsberg, "Reflexes of Sargon in Isaiah after 715 B. C. E.," JAOS 88 (1968), 52, n. 30, this passage is a "reflex" of the second Akkadian passage listed in note 25.

²⁷ Nowhere else in any of the Mesopotamian flood stories is the boat of the hero ever called a "palace" or anything similar.

²⁸ R. Borger, BAL, III, 118, translates lines 94-95 as follows: "To the calker of the ship, to Puzur-Kurgal the sailor, I gave [my] palace [in Šurippak] together with its property."

²⁹ See the excursus at the end of this paper.

composition entitled "The Legend of Sargon"³⁰ which describes Sargon's birth is parallel in content and theme to the story of Moses' birth in Ex. 2:1-10. The similarities may be summarized as follows: In both, the mother of the hero³¹ is forced by circumstances beyond her control to abandon her child.³² She prepares a receptacle for him, makes it water-tight by calking it with bitumen, places her child in it and sets the receptacle upon the water. The receptacle is found, the infant is raised, has some divine contact³³ and finally becomes a hero of his people. A literary connection between the receptacle mentioned in the Legend of Sargon and the boat of the Akkadian flood story has never been noted, but should such a connection exist, it might help explain why תִּנְיָה was used in both the biblical flood story and the story of Moses' birth. For the boats used in the respective flood stories might have been considered to have had some special protective quality of divine origin.³⁴ It would then have been just this divine protective quality to which the biblical author was alluding when he called Moses' receptacle תִּנְיָה, and to which the Akkadian author was alluding when he conjured up the image of Utnapištim's ark in his description of

30 The text may be found in CT 13 (1901), plates 42 and 43 and now CT 46 (1965), plate 46 #46. For transliteration and translation, cf. L. W. King, Chronicles Concerning Early Babylonian Kings, II (London, 1907), 87-96. For partial translation, cf. H. G. Güterbock, ZA 42 (1934), 62-64, and E. A. Speiser, ANET³, 119. Note that A. K. Grayson and W. G. Lambert, "Akkadian Prophecies," JCS 18 (1964), 8, have labeled this legend as belonging to a genre of texts which they call "poetic autobiographies."

31 Both of these legends belong to a literary genre which concerns itself with the birth of the hero. For other texts of the same genre, and a psychological explanation of the existence of such a genre, see O. Rank, The Myth of the Birth of the Hero (New York, 1932) and J. Campbell, Hero with a Thousand Faces (New York and Cleveland, 1956).

32 See the excursus at the end of this paper.

33 God communicates with Moses for the first time in Ex. 3:4ff., while Ištar loves Sargon in line 11 of the Sargon legend.

34 Since the instructions for building both the biblical ark and its Akkadian counterpart were of divine origin (Gen. 6:14-16; Gilg. XI:28-31, 88), it probably was felt that the finished product in each case was completely infallible. For the authors of both the Sargon Legend and the story of Moses' birth to put this divine stamp of approval on their heroes' receptacle through a literary allusion to the arks in their respective flood stories is quite understandable.

Sargon's receptacle. Such a connection does perhaps exist not in respect to what the receptacle and the boat are called,³⁵ but in respect to the precautions taken by Utnapištim (=Atrahasis) and the mother of Sargon in making their respective vessels water-tight, and the reference to a bābu "gate" on both vessels, a term which is exceedingly rare in nautical terminology³⁶ and is of uncertain meaning.³⁷ The relevant texts³⁸ are as follows:

³⁵ Admittedly, this is a problem. For had the author of the Sargon Legend really wished to allude to the Akkadian ark, he should have called Sargon's receptacle by the name for that ark in the Akkadian flood story, elippu, just as the author of the story of Moses' birth called his hero's receptacle חבה. However, the answer to this problem may well lie in the fact that elippu is also the regular Akkadian generic term for "boat," and had the author of the Sargon Legend used it, no one would have known to which boat he was referring. Thus, as opposed to the biblical author whose use of the term חבה in the story of Moses' birth is a clear allusion to the Hebrew ark (the term חבה is found only in the flood story and Moses' birth story), the Akkadian author of the Sargon Legend could not possibly have used elippu for his hero's receptacle to achieve this same purpose. He had to draw on some unique characteristic of the Akkadian ark so as to make his allusion recognizable.

³⁶ A. Salonen, Die Wasserfahrzeuge in Babylonien (Helsinki, 1939), 97 lists no other examples besides those in the flood story. CAD, B, 274 lists only one other example of bābu as part of a boat. The text involved (published in transliteration and translation by O. R. Gurney, "A Tablet of Incantations against Slander," Iraq 22 [1960], 221-227) mentions bābu together with makurru "type of boat (perhaps 'barge')" several times (lines 18-19, 24 cf. lines 4, 16). The ritual prescribed in this text involved the making of a clay boat into which figurines representing sorcerers and slanderers were placed. The bābu of this boat was then sealed and the boat was launched on the water where it would either capsize in a storm or float away downstream.

³⁷ The translation "hatch" is only provisional and merely a guess from context. Salonen, Wasserfahrzeuge, 96, defines bīt elippi as "Aufbau auf dem Deck des Schiffes" and identifies bāb elippi as "Tür des bīt elippi" which fits very nicely for Utnapištim's ark, but not at all for Sargon's basket. The meaning of bāb elippi was already discussed by H. V. Hilprecht, The Earliest Version of the Babylonian Deluge Story and the Temple Library of Nippur (Philadelphia, 1910), 54-55, where an attempt was made to connect Hebrew חבה and Egyptian dbt with the phrase bāb elippi. This attempt, however, is based on many faulty readings and translations and has, therefore, only historical significance today.

³⁸ Under bābu, CAD, B, 24 also lists Gilg. X:v:33, which, however, is much too broken to be taken into consideration here.

Gilg. XI:88: erub ana libbi elippimma peḥi bābka "Enter the ship, calk your hatch[?]."39

Gilg. XI:93: ērub ana libbi elippi apteḥi bābī "I entered the ship, I calked my hatch[?]."40

Atrahasis III, ii:51-52: [k]upru babil ipeḥi bābšu ištuma idilu bābšu "Pitch was brought, he calked its hatch[?]. After he had locked its hatch[?]..."41

Atrahasis Fragment W:6: [elippa] erumma bāb elippi tirra42 "Enter the boat, close the boat's hatch[?]."43

Atrahasis Fragment W:10: [ašap]parakkumma inaššarū bābka "I will send [beasts of the field] to you, they will guard your hatch[?]."44

Legend of Sargon:5: iškunanni ina cuppi ša šūri ina ittī bābiya45 ipḥi "She set me in a basket of rushes, she calked my hatch[?] with bitumen."46

In summation, we have shown that none of the solutions heretofore presented satisfactorily explain why the term תנה was used in both the biblical flood story and the story of Moses' birth. Two would-be solutions revolve, in one way or another, around the Egyptian ḏb't, which never has anything to do with boats, and therefore can not be compared. The third is based on the late Hebrew usages of תנה but is philologically unsound. One partial answer to the problem, which is not without difficulty, but which may nevertheless be leading in the right direction, involves the similarity

39 R. C. Thompson, The Epic of Gilgamesh (Oxford, 1929), 62.

40 Ibid.

41 W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, Atrahasis (London, 1969), 92.

42 For this meaning of tāru in the II/1 as "close, lock," cf. Salonen, Wasserfahrzeuge, 97, and note the lexical equation cited in CAD, E, 25 (from CT 18, plate 4, reverse ii:6ff.): ...tu-ur-ru... = e-de-lu "to lock."

43 Lambert, Atrahasis, 129.

44 Ibid.

45 That this is grammatically incorrect and should have read bābī (singular accusative, cf. Gilg. XI:93) was already pointed out by Güterbock, ZA 42 (1934), 62, n. 5.

46 King, Chronicles, 89.

in description and preparation of the respective vessels in the Akkadian flood story and the story of Sargon's birth. The author of the story of Moses' birth might likewise have called the receptacle into which Moses was placed by the same name that was given to the biblical ark in the Hebrew flood story, because of some protective quality of divine origin which the latter possessed and to which the author of the story of Moses' birth wished to allude. This literary allusion is certainly not the entire answer to the problem (which surely can not be completely solved until the meaning of תבה is established on a sound philological basis), but it is hopefully a step in the right direction.

EXCURSUSThe Legend of Sargon and the Birth of Moses

Despite the fact that the Legend of Sargon¹ and the Birth of Moses² have long been accepted as parallel in content and theme,³ recently, criticism has been leveled against this identification by a few biblical scholars.⁴ Their major arguments may be summed up as follows:

I. The motivations of the heroes' mothers in the respective stories are quite different: "Whereas in the

¹ See note 28 above for bibliography.

² Ex. 2:1-10.

³ They are both classical examples of the literary motif of the exposed child. For other examples of this motif, cf. P. Jensen, "Aussetzungsgeschichten," Reallexicon der Assyriologie I (1928), 322-324, and now D. B. Redford, "The Literary Motif of the Exposed Child," Numen 14 (1967), 209-228. For the most recent and certainly most exhaustive discussion of this literary motif with complete bibliography of primary sources, cf. T. H. Gaster, Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament (New York, 1969), 224-230. Note also B. S. Childs ("The Birth of Moses," JBL 84 [1965], 109-122) who agrees that "the Moses birth story is an exposure saga" (p. 115), but adds that the sequence of events pertaining to the finding, raising and eventual adoption of the exposed foundling, together with the hiring of a wet nurse to wean him, is "traditional and not the creation of the Hebrew author" (p. 111). The ancient Near Eastern parallel presented as evidence of this tradition is the series of bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian legal texts ana ittišu which was edited by B. Landsberger, MSL, I (Rome, 1937). The problem in making such a comparison is noted by Childs himself when he states: "The fact that two completely different genres of literature are involved, one narrative and one legal, cannot be lightly dismissed. At most the case can be defended that the sequence of the Moses story reflects a pattern which originally had a legal provenance" (p. 111). The fact that such a sequence is unknown from any ancient Near Eastern source other than the two aforementioned texts, indicates, at least for the time being, that the similarity of sequence in these two compositions is probably due not to established tradition, but rather to mere coincidence.

⁴ M. Cogan, "A Technical Term for Exposure," JNES 27 (1968), 133-135; M. Greenberg, Understanding Exodus (New York, 1969), 36-44 and especially 198-199; B. Jacob, "The Childhood and Youth of Moses, the Messenger of God," in I. Epstein et. al. eds., Essays in Honour of the Very Rev. Dr. J. H. Hertz (London, 1944), 245-259; A. S. Yahuda, The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian (London, 1933), 205, n. 2 and 262-265.

legend of Sargon (and similar tales) the child is abandoned to protect others (apparently to hide the shame of his mother in Sargon's case), the disposition made of Moses was for his own protection."⁵

II. In the biblical story of Moses' birth, the hero's mother placed (וַתִּשְׁלֹךְ) him into the river, while in the Akkadian legend of Sargon's birth, the hero's mother cast (iddanni) him into the river. Therefore, whereas the Akkadian legend of Sargon is a typical exposure narrative, "...the avoidance of the term for 'abandonment' suggests that...our [biblical] author not merely tempered, but virtually eliminated the element of exposure."⁶

III. The closest parallel to the story of the birth of Moses "occurs precisely in Egyptian myth, in the allusions to Isis' concealment of her infant child Horus in a Delta papyrus-thicket, to save him from death at the hands of Seth."⁷

We will deal with each of these arguments in turn:

I. While the motivation of Moses' mother in abandoning her child has always been quite clear,⁸ the situation with respect to the motivation of Sargon's mother has, until quite recently, been somewhat uncertain. The problem lies in the fact that the motivation is not explicitly stated in the extant Sargon legend, and can not be inferred without some knowledge of the mother's role in the story. She is called e-né-tum which has been interpreted in two different ways. E. A. Speiser,⁹ followed by M. Greenberg,¹⁰ translated "changeling" on the basis of Akkadian enû "to change, alter," while the

⁵ Greenberg, Exodus, 198; Cf. Jacob, Childhood, 246 and especially 255; Yahuda, Language, 264.

⁶ Cogan, Exposure, 118; Cf. Greenberg, Exodus, 199.

⁷ Greenberg, Exodus, 198-199.

⁸ Cf. Pharaoh's edict in Ex. 1:22 and the narrative in Ex. 2:2-3. Here we are in agreement with Childs (Birth of Moses, 117-118) who contends "that the motivation for the exposure is a motif created by the Hebrew author in order to make possible his use of the exposure saga in telling the story of the birth of Moses" (p. 117).

⁹ ANET², 119.

¹⁰ Greenberg, Exodus, 198.

CAD,¹¹ following B. Landsberger,¹² connected this substantive with Akkadian ēntum "priestess"¹³ despite the unusual form of the noun. H. G. Güterbock¹⁴ had earlier rejected both possibilities, leaving the question more or less open. If the ēnetum could be identified with the ēntum priestess, this would solve the problem of motivation, for the ēntum priestess was apparently not permitted to bear children.¹⁵ The basis of this identification by the editors of the CAD was the following lexical equation:¹⁶ ba-ár BAR = be-el-tú, en-e-tú (A I/6 : 286-287). This equation showed that ēntu could be written ēnetu in the singular. However, W. G. Lambert has recently published evidence which is even more compelling from a contextual point of view, for it describes in detail the role of the ēntu priestess in society:¹⁷

appūna šaluštum libši ina nišī ina nišī ālittumma lā
ālittum....šukni ukbakkāti ēnēti u egišāti lū ikkibū
šināma alādam pur[si]

In addition let there be a third category among the people, among the people [let there be] women who bear and women who do not bear....Establish Ugbabtu-women, ēntu-women and Igišitu-women. Let them be taboo, and so stop childbirth (Atrahasis III vii:1-2, 6-9).

As correctly noted by Lambert in his commentary, the motivation of Sargon's mother is thus quite clear:¹⁸

His mother was an ēntu (e-né-tum), who, on his birth put him on the river like Moses. In view of the rules of her order, she had to conceal his birth.

¹¹ CAD, E, 173.

¹² ZA 30 (1915/16), 71ff.

¹³ Cf. now ANET³, 119 where the translation has been changed to "high priestess."

¹⁴ ZA 42 (1934), 62, n. 2.

¹⁵ Cf. M. Astour, JBL 85 (1966), 188ff., and the discussion in CAD, E, 173.

¹⁶ Quoted in CAD, E, 172.

¹⁷ Lambert, Atrahasis, 102. Note that the plural form ēnētu is used here just as in Maqlû VI:28, 39.

¹⁸ Lambert, Atrahasis, 165.

Our knowledge of the mother's attitude is still furthered by Güterbock's astute observation that the careful calking of the receptacle by Sargon's mother (line 5) is an obvious indication that her purpose was to give her child a chance to live even though she could no longer keep him:¹⁹

Gemeint ist jedenfalls das der Deckel abgedichtet wird, damit kein Wasser eindringen kann; denn der Sinn der Aussetzung ist das die Mutter ihr Kind nicht töten will, sondern ihm die Chance gibt gerettet zu werden.

Thus, the mother of Moses and the mother of Sargon were both forced to give up their children. They both wanted their child to live, however, and thus did everything they could to make sure that he would not perish.

II. Cogan's claim that השליך is the Hebrew semantic equivalent of Akkadian nadû "to throw, cast" (used in line 6 of the Legend of Sargon) and that both these verbs must be translated "reject, abandon, expose" in contexts of exposure is certainly correct. However, his contention that Hebrew השליך is the only term (or "the technical term") which can be used in exposure narratives with this meaning is untenable. The regular verb in biblical Hebrew for 'abandon, reject, expose' is simply עזב (Isa. 18:6; 27:10; 32:14; 62:4; Jer. 12:7; Ezek. 23:29; 36:4; Ps. 16:10; 27:10; 37:25; 38:22; 71:9, 18) and its semantic and etymological equivalent in Akkadian is ezēbu. The following example from the archives of Mari is to the point:²⁰ šalamtašu [!] ina šubātim uqabbirūma ana Ḫubur īzibū "they buried his corpse in a garment and exposed it to the river Hubur." When a verb expressing exactly how the abandonment took place is substituted for עזב or ezēbu, the purpose of such a substitution is simply to provide a more vivid description of the abandonment, e.g. שים "to place" (Gen. 40:15; Ex. 2:3; 2 Chron. 18:26); השליך "to throw, cast" (Gen. 21:15; Ex. 1:22; Jer. 38:6,9; Ezek. 16:5; Ps. 51:13; 71:9; Eccles. 3:6); הושיב "to install" (Ezek. 26:20; Ps. 143:3; Lam. 3:6).

¹⁹ Güterbock, ZA 42 (1934), 63.

²⁰ ARM VI, #37, rev. 5-6. For this and many other examples, cf. CAD, E, 416-423.

III. For all the reasons stated above, it should now be clear that the parallelism in content and theme between the Birth of Moses and the Legend of Sargon stands. The story of Moses' birth should be looked upon as an exposure legend whose chief purpose is to explain Moses' birth and infancy in terms of the typical exposure motif. Whether the biblical author was inspired by the Sargon Legend or any other exposure story is something which we can never know, but such an inspiration is certainly within the realm of possibility. On the other hand, the Egyptian parallel²¹ adduced by Greenberg could not possibly have inspired the biblical author because it dates from the Ptolemaic period.²² Furthermore, the purpose of this Egyptian text is not to tell about the birth and infancy of a hero and how he came to be a leader of his people, but rather "to elucidate the origins of the name of the Jackal God Anubis (Egyptian inp), and to explain how it came about that this god was identified with Horus."²³ Finally, the slight parallelism in detail between the Birth of Moses and this Egyptian text is probably due to the great amount of foreign literary influence in Egyptian works of the Ptolemaic period, which would make the possibility of the biblical account influencing the Egyptian myth much more conceivable than the other way around.²⁴ In this connection, we are completely in accord with Redford's reasoning:

The fact is, however, and its importance can not be minimized, that the parallels cited come from the Greco-Roman

²¹ The text is from J. Vandier, Le Papyrus Jumilhac (Paris, n.d.). Cf. W. Helck, "Tkw und die Ramses Stadt," VT 15 (1965), 48; Redford, Exposed Child, 221-224.

²² Not only is the extant copy of this text to be dated in the Ptolemaic period, the text itself must also have been written then. The entire work is based on puns, many of which involve words which were not used until the Ptolemaic period. For example, Greenberg, Exodus, 40, makes a point of the fact that the Egyptian text relates that the infant was in a "reed boat." The word for boat here, upon which the pun on the name Anubis is made, is inp. The Egyptian substantive inp "boat" is found only in Ptolemaic texts according to A. Erman and H. Grapow, Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache (Leipzig, 1925), I, 96:5-6. For this and other examples, see Redford, Exposed Child, 224, n. 65.

²³ Redford, Exposed Child, 222.

²⁴ For examples of this foreign influence in late versions of the Osiris and Horus myths, see Redford, Exposed Child, 223-224, n. 64.

period when literary cross-fertilization had been going on for a long time. By the time that the Jumilhac Papyrus was written, Egypt had been sufficiently exposed to both Hebrew and Classical literature for influences from those sources to have crept into the age-old myths. Nor can one assume that the passage translated, [i.e. the relevant passage in the Jumilhac Papyrus], reflects independent material of genuine antiquity. The vocabulary used by the writer, even the words on which the puns depend, show clearly that the stories in this part of the papyrus at least came into existence at a late date....The narrative of Exodus 2 still finds its closest parallel in the Sargon legend, and parallels almost as close in Classical literature.²⁵

²⁵ Redford, Exposed Child, 223-224.