

*The Mountains of Ararat, Mount Lubar and הַר הַקְדָּם*¹

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According to Genesis 8:4, Noah's ark rested on a mountain in the land of Ararat² after the Flood. Jubilees, the Genesis Apocryphon, 4QpsDn, 6Q8 and *Sepher Noah* give the name of the mountain as Lubar (לובר).³ To my knowledge, no convincing etymology of the name has hitherto been proposed.

Charles records a suggestion of Sayce which connects the first syllable of Lubar with Lulu, the indigenous name of Ararat, and the second syllable with Baris, the name of a great mountain in Armenia upon which ruins of the Ark were reported by Nicolaus of Damascus to have survived.⁴ Fitzmyer's discussion of the name⁵ rightly ignores this proposal but offers nothing to replace it.

Since a number of the early works in which the name לובר is found are in Aramaic, it seems reasonable to look for an Aramaic etymology. There is, in fact, an Aramaic word לובר used to describe wood in an Elephantine document authorizing the repair of a boat.⁶ Perles's note on this word reads as follows:

Aram. Pap. Eleph. 8, 13. 17 עקי ארו לובר (Ggs. עקי ארו חדתן) ist aus *lābiru* entlehnt (OLZ 1911, 499). Die Entlehnung eines solchen Wortes findet ihre vollkommene Parallele in 'antik'.⁷

¹ I am indebted to my colleague, M. J. Bernstein, for his comments on this note, and to my daughter, Chani, for stylistic improvements.

² More precisely, 'on the mountains of Ararat (הרי אררט)'. Ararat here is not the name of the mountains but the name of the country in which the mountains were located; cf. הרי יהודה and see note 16 below. The modern Mount Ararat in Turkey obviously takes its name from a mistaken understanding of the phrase.

³ J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I* (Rome, 1971), 100. Unfortunately, the account of the landing of the ark is fragmentary in the Genesis Apocryphon (X.12), and the name has not been preserved there. It is preserved only in the story of Noah's vineyard (XII.3). Jubilees, too, locates Noah's vineyard on Mount Lubar, and there can be little doubt that the author of Genesis Apocryphon shared the assumption of Jubilees that Noah planted his vineyard on the mountain where the ark rested.

⁴ R. H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees* (London, 1902), 47–48, note 28.

⁵ Op. cit.

⁶ A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1923), no. 26 = B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1986), no. A6.2, lines 13, 17.

⁷ Felix Perles, 'Ergänzungen zu den 'Akkadischen Fremdwörtern'', *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 21 (1918), 69.

Kaufman accepts this etymology without comment.⁸ Cowley, on the other hand, is somewhat hesitant:

לובר as compared with חדתן (l. 10) suggests Bab. *labiru* 'old,' i.e. seasoned, but the ל is difficult.⁹

The etymology appears to be well founded. Akkadian *labiru* is indeed used of wood, as the very first entry in *AHw* s.v. *labi/eru(m)* shows.¹⁰ The ל is no obstacle, for the rounding and raising of *a* to *o/ū* is well attested before *b* in early Aramaic.¹¹

It would seem, therefore, that the name of Mount Lubar is an Aramaic word of Akkadian origin meaning 'ancient'. This etymology brings to mind the Hebrew word קדם, whose semantic equivalence to Akkadian *labiru* is established by such idiomatic phrases as *ultu labiri* = מקדם 'since olden times', and *kīma labirimma* = כקדם 'as of old'. With some trepidation, I offer the further speculation that לובר טורא is identical to הר הקדם in Gen. 10:30.¹²

The proposed identification is, of course, in direct conflict with the modern scholarly consensus which would locate הר הקדם in South Arabia, very far from Ararat. This consensus, however, is based on an interpretation of Gen. 10:30 as referring to Joktan alone—an interpretation which is, at best, problematic. It hardly seems reasonable that the territory of Joktan should be the only portion of the Shemite realm to merit delineation in Gen. 10. Moreover, scholars have yet to offer convincing South Arabian identifications of משא and ספר.¹³

In my view, it is more reasonable to accept the assumption of classical Jewish exegesis (cf. Bekhor Shor and Ramban to Gen. 11:2) that Gen. 10:30 gives the extent of the territory of *all* the descendants of Shem. This interpretation removes the only obstacle to the proposed identification of הר הקדם with Mount Lubar in Ararat, for Ararat was indeed part of the territory of Shem.¹⁴

Four verses after this reference to הר הקדם, in Gen. 11:2, we encounter another occurrence of the word קדם:

ויהי בנסעם מקדם ימצאו בקעה בארץ שנער וישבו שם

The starting point of the journey (or nomadic wandering) described in this verse was the subject of controversy in the Middle Ages. Ibn Ezra, Ramban

⁸ S. A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Chicago, 1974), 66.

⁹ Cowley, p. 95.

¹⁰ W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden, 1965), 525a. I follow *AHw* in normalizing the word with a short *i*, which remains unelided thanks to the following *r*.

¹¹ K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen, 1984), 412. It should also be noted that *i* is lowered to *a* before final *r* in Aramaic (ibid., 107–8), hence *labir* > *lubar*.

¹² I leave open the question of the relationship of the latter to הררי קדם in Nu. 23:7.

¹³ *Encyclopedia Mikra'it*, V, 481, 1080.

¹⁴ Cf. Jubilees VIII.21.

and Abarbanel assumed (like Jubilees) that the journey began at הַר אֲרָרַט,¹⁵ taking מִקְדָּם to mean 'from the east'. The problem with this view is that the land of Ararat¹⁶ is certainly not east of Babylon. Taking מִקְדָּם to mean 'to the east', as do Jubilees¹⁷ and some modern scholars, does not solve the problem completely, for the centre of Ararat is not very far to the west of Babylon either; it is best described as north of Babylon.

Rashi and Meyuhas, on the other hand, equated קָדָם in this verse with הַר הַקָּדָם, asserting that the journey began at that mountain. The abbreviation of הַר הַקָּדָם to קָדָם is perfectly natural (cf. mountain names like צִיּוֹן, צָפוֹן and לְבָנוֹן); a similar fluctuation between 'Mount Lubar' and 'Lubar' alone is found in Jubilees. The problems with this view, as noted by Bekhor Shor and Ramban, are (a) that 10:30 describes the territory of Shem alone, whereas 11:2 presumably refers to all of the descendants of Noah, and (b) that 10:30 seems to refer to a time period later than that of 11:2, i.e. after the dispersion which resulted from the Tower of Babel incident. These criticisms assume, probably correctly, that Rashi did not locate הַר הַקָּדָם in Ararat.

My suggestion that הַר הַקָּדָם is the Hebrew equivalent of לוֹבַר טוּרָא makes it possible to combine these two views, accepting the best points of each: the journey to Shinar began at הַר הַקָּדָם which is one of the הַרֵי אֲרָרַט.¹⁸ This combined interpretation does not suffer from the problems inherent in its components: all of the descendants of Noah travelled from a place which was later to belong to Shem alone, and the southward direction of their journey is perfectly compatible with the phrase מִקְדָּם.

¹⁵ This is the plain sense of the Genesis narrative, as was pointed out to me by my colleague S. Z. Leiman before either of us had investigated the problem. It was his comment that led to the second half of this note.

¹⁶ This country, located around Lake Van in present-day Armenia, is mentioned several additional times in the Bible (II Kings 19:38; Is. 37:38; Jer. 51:27) and frequently in Assyrian inscriptions (as *Urartu*).

¹⁷ 'For they departed from the land of Ararat eastward to Shinar' (X.19); cf. Gen. 13:11 where מִקְדָּם seems to be equivalent to קְדָמָה.

¹⁸ Interestingly enough, it also eliminates some of the difference between these views and that of R. Eleazar b. Shimeon in Genesis Rabba, which interprets קָדָם as קְדָמוֹנוֹ שְׁלוֹלָם.