

Berossos, from *Brill's New Jacoby*

Berossos of Babylon (680)

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BNJ 680 F 1b

Synkellos, *Chronography* p. 49, 19

It remains after this ... to cite small excerpts from the authors of Chaldaean and Egyptian histories. Through them their disagreement with each other and with the Divine Scripture will be completely evident to the faithful, as well as the refutation of their fabulous nonsense.

From Alexander Polyhistor [BNJ 273] concerning the ten kings of the Chaldaeans who reigned before the flood [BNJ 680 F 3] and the flood itself [BNJ 680 F 4], [[and concerning Noah and the ark]], in which he also inserts some fabulous stories, as is written by *Berossos*.

(1) *Berossos* says in his first book of the *Babyloniaka* that as for his age, he lived in the time of Alexander the son of Philip. Records of many had been preserved with great care in Babylon, which encompassed a period of somewhat more than 150,000 years ago. The records comprised stories about the sky and the sea, the first generations and the kings and the achievements in their reigns. (2) And he first says that the land of the Babylonians lies in the middle of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and that it yields wild wheat, barley, chickpeas, and sesame. Roots are eaten that grow in the marshes. They are called gongae. These roots have the same properties as barley. There are dates, apples, and all kinds of other tree-fruits and fish and land- and water-fowl. The regions of the land near Arabia are waterless and infertile, the regions lying opposite Arabia are mountainous and fertile. (3) In Babylon there was a great crowd of men of different races, who had settled in Chaldea. They lived without order like wild animals. (4) In the first year there appeared from the Red Sea in a place adjacent to Babylonia a [[silly]] beast named Oannes [[just as Apollodoros also recorded]]. It had the whole body of a fish, but under the head, a human head grew beside underneath the head of the fish and feet of a human likewise grew beside from the tail of the fish. It had a human voice. Its image is still preserved even now. He says that this beast spent the day with men, touching no food. It gave men the knowledge of letters and sciences and crafts of all types. It also taught the founding of cities, the establishment of temples, and the introduction of laws and land-measurement, and showed them seeds and the gathering of fruits. In general, it taught men everything

that is connected with a civilised life. From that time nothing further has been discovered. When the sun set, this beast Oannes plunged back into the sea and spent the nights in the sea. For it was amphibious. (5) Later, other beasts similar to it also appeared, about whom, he says, he will explain in the record of the kings. Oannes wrote about birth and government and handed down the following account to men: (6) There was a time, he says, when everything was [darkness and] water and that in it fabulous beings with peculiar forms came to life. For men with two wings were born and some with four wings and two faces, having one body and two heads, male and female, and double genitalia, male and female. Other men were born, some having the legs and the horns of goats, others with the feet of horses. Yet others had the hind parts of horses, but the foreparts of men, and were hippocentaurs in form. Bulls were also engendered having the heads of men as well as four-bodied dogs having the tails of a fish from their hind parts, dog-headed horses and men and other beings having heads and bodies of horses, but tails of fish and still other beings having forms of all sorts of wild animals. In addition to these, there were fish and reptiles and snakes and many other marvellous creatures differing in appearance from one another. Images of these were also set up in the temple of Belos. Over all these a woman ruled named Omorka. This means in Chaldaean †Thalatth, in Greek it is translated as 'Sea' (Thalassa) [[or, according to the equivalent in numerical value, 'Moon' (Selene)]]. (7) When everything was arranged in this way, Belos rose up and split the woman in two. Of one half of her he made earth, of the other half sky; and he destroyed all creatures in her. He says that this was an allegorical discourse on nature, for when everything was moist and creatures had come into being in it, this god took off his own head and the other gods mixed the blood that flowed out with earth and formed men. For this reason they are intelligent and share in divine wisdom. [(8) Belos, whom they translate as Zeus, cut the darkness in half and separated earth and sky from each other and ordered the universe. The creatures could not endure the power of the light and were destroyed. When Belos saw the land empty and barren, he ordered one of the gods to cut off his own head and to mix the blood that flowed out with earth and to form men and wild animals that were capable of enduring the air.] (9) Belos also completed the stars and the sun and the moon and the five planets. Alexander Polyhistor says that *Berossos* asserts these things in his first book; in his second book [he describes] the ten kings of the Chaldaeans and the period of their reign, 120 *saroi*, that is 432,000 years (680 F 3), until the flood. [680 F 4]