

# Yovasap' of Sebastia: From Adam to Noah and the Tower

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**Abstract** In this article we present an annotated edition and translation of a poem probably written by Yovasap' Sebastac'i (ca. 1510-after 1564). Member of a longer cycle of biblical retellings in verse, it narrates the history of the world from Adam down to the Tower of Babel. At points, Yovasap' departs from the biblical narrative to offer homiletic or typological elaborations, and shows a deep familiarity with numerous parabiblical traditions. The poem is a fine specimen of the Armenian embroidered Bible, and attests to the ways biblical and parabiblical traditions were accepted and developed in the Armenian literary sphere.

**Keywords** Yovasap' of Sebastia (Sebastac'i). Biblical retelling. Parabiblical traditions. Armenian Medieval poetry. Typology. Pseudepigrapha.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Text and Translation.



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## 1 Introduction

This poem is found in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS or. quart. 805, ff. 278r-279r.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is comprised of 317 folios in various hands and, on palaeographic grounds, is to be dated to the seventeenth century. It is written in *bolorgir* script on paper.<sup>1</sup>

The orthography shows many of the variant spellings encountered in mediaeval Armenian manuscripts, and moreover, is inconsistent in that variation. Such variations may be seen in other mediaeval manuscripts, but in SBB or. quart. 805 they are rather prominent. Thus, on some occasions ի > է, but not always. Other variations include:

-եց / -եաց  
կ / ք  
նկ / նգ  
չ / ջ  
-ւ / -վ  
-ւնց / -նց, etc.

In addition to these changes the text also occasionally attests to mediaeval Armenian forms, for instance in stanza 12 line 1: վրայ ջրին.

This poem is a member of a longer cycle of poems which together form a verse retelling of biblical stories. This piece, on the period from Adam to the period directly after the Tower of Babel, is immediately followed by a poem on Abraham,<sup>2</sup> which is followed in turn by a similar poem on Jacob, Joseph, and the patriarchs. It is desirable, of course, that the whole poetic composition, of which the Adam, Abraham, and Jacob poems are sections, be published. The same manuscript also preserves other works including the *History of Alexander* as well as demonological texts. It also contains a number of illustrations, none of which relates to the biblical stories.

Stanza 30 of the poem published here mentions “Yovasap’” as the author. The only poet of this name mentioned in Bardakjian’s

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The authors are members of the Jerusalem Advanced Armenian Reading Group, guided by Michael E. Stone. Stone prepared a preliminary edition of the poem, which was then verified, completed, and revised by the other authors in 2023-24. Scholarly responsibility is borne jointly.

**1** See Assfalg, Molitor 1962, no. 23, 93-100.

**2** The Abraham poem bears the title, “Poem on Abraham, Isaac, Melchizedek, and Lot”, and has been published in *Arm Apoc* 3, 86-93.

*Reference Guide* and Pogharian's *Armenian Writers*<sup>3</sup> is Yovasap' Sebastac'i (ca. 1510-after 1564). In his discussion of the works of Yovasap', Bardakjian does not mention a rhymed biblical retelling; nonetheless, the text of the poem makes clear that Yovasap' is the author of the poem.<sup>4</sup> A study of Yovasap's biography, accompanied by publication of much of his poetic corpus, was published V.P. Gevorgyan in 1964. In that work, though he mentions the Berlin manuscript and gives a full description of it, based on a re-examination of the manuscript in microfilm format and including listing of the biblical cycle, he does not publish the poems themselves. He assents to the view that it is an autograph of Yovasap's.

Our primary purpose in this paper, however, is not to resolve literary problems nor to study Yovasap's poetry in its own right. That would be best done in conjunction with the publication of the whole biblical cycle. Here, we make available this retelling of the traditions relating to the antediluvian history, as retold in poetic form by Yovasap', which is closely related to Armenian narrative parabiblical texts devoted to the same topic. It is significant to note that whole lines of this poem are incomprehensible without knowledge of those parabiblical traditions. This indicates how widely the Armenian parabiblical traditions circulated. Thus, Yovasap' sometimes simply alludes, by the way, to parabiblical incidents that were apparently quite familiar to his readers.

In addition to such parabiblical embroideries, Yovasap' departs from the biblical details to make homiletic or typological points. Instances of this are pointed out in the notes to the translation below. That is another indication of his approach to the biblical text.

The poem is written in monorhyme. The rhyme is in -hũ (stanzas 1-8) and -uũ (9-32). In the manuscript, coloured initials mark the beginning of each stanza.

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**3** Bardakjian 2000, 35-8; Pogharian 1971, 453-6. See also Ačařyan, HAB, 3:535. This poem is not mentioned by Abeghian 1955.

**4** Bardakjian 2000, 35-8. Prof. Henrik Bakhchinyan has confirmed Yovasap' Sebastac'i's authorship of this biblical cycle (personal communication with Michael Stone).

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## 2 Text and Translation

Ոտանաւոր յԱդամայ հետէ մինչեւ ի Նոյ եւ Յաշտարակն. տուն L. (30)  
Poem from Adam up to Noah and the Tower (30 stanzas)  
Yovasap' Sebastac'i<sup>5</sup>

Ելեալ եւ բնակեր Ադամ դեմ դրախտին, 1  
Տրտմութեամբ վաստակեր գերկիր ի գործին.  
Ծնեալ ուստեր դստեր կնոջն Եւային,  
Մինչ Բ.(2) քառասուն համարով թվին.

Adam went forth and dwelt opposite the Garden.  
Sadly, he toiled in working the earth.<sup>6</sup>  
Eve, his wife, bore sons and daughters  
Until they were twice forty by count.<sup>7</sup>

Իսկ չարն, որ նախ էհան գԱդամ ի դրախտին.<sup>8</sup> 2  
Գրգրեց<sup>9</sup> գԿայեն նախանձ Աբելին.  
Վասն հաճոյ զոհին յանուն Արարչին,  
Եւ նա եսպան զՀաբել յարօտ ոչխարին.

**5** The text was collated by Michael E. Stone and verified by William Walk. Donna Shalev has read the whole and contributed in several important ways and Th. M. van Lint provided, as he has so often in the past, several very insightful interpretations. Matthew Wilson formatted the file.

**6** Observe that agriculture was seen as directly following the Expulsion. This was doubtless understood as a fulfilment of the curse in Gen 3, 17-19. This connection was already made, it seems, in the Armenian *Life of Adam and Eve (Penitence of Adam)* and *Georg* 20:1b. It is shown very strikingly in the frescos of the Adam Cycle in Sucevița (Bukovina): see Stone, Timotin 2023, 119-20 and in Western Europe in the illustrations of Lutwin's *Adam and Eve Codex Vindob.* 2980, f. 23v: see Halford 1980. This undesirable association of agriculture linked Adam's curse and Cain's being a farmer in Gen 4, 2. In the Slavonic and Romanian *LAE*, Satan presents himself as lord of the earth and berates Adam for working it without permission: see Stone, Timotin 2023, 77 and fnn. 20 and 21 there.

**7** The number 80 (2 × 40) is strange. The meaning seems to be that Eve bore twins, a boy and a girl, in each pregnancy; cf. *History of the Forefathers* §29 in *Arm Apoc* 2, 195, where only sixty children and thirty pregnancies are mentioned. See further the references in Stone 1996, 195 fn. 1. In other sources, in Armenian and other language parabiblica, the span of 30 years between the births of Cain and Abel is usual: see *Arm Apoc* 2, 92-3; *Arm Apoc* 7, §9.5 and notes there. As it stands, the poem seems to suggest that Eve bore 80 children prior to Cain's murder of Abel, whereas the biblical text apparently states otherwise (see Gen 4,25 and 5,4).

**8** Here the definite ablative ending -իւ becomes -ի՛ն because of the exigencies of the monorhyme. On several other occasions, Yovasap' changes suffixes for the same reason, as will be pointed out below.

**9** Deviant orthography of գոգոնե(ա)ց:.

Then the Evil One,<sup>10</sup> who before brought Adam out of the  
[Garden,  
Excited Cain's enmity of Abel,  
On account of the pleasing sacrifice<sup>11</sup> to the Creator's Name,<sup>12</sup>  
And he killed Abel in the sheep's pasture.<sup>13</sup>

Իսկ Ադամ եւ որդիքն իւր արտոււմ կային, 3  
Ոչ իշխէին յիշել զանունն Արարչին.  
Մինչեւ Էնոսկս կոչեց զՏէր յօգնութիւն.  
Յուսացօ եւ Էառ մարգարէութիւնն:

Then Adam and his sons were sad,  
They could not remember the Creator's Name,  
Until Enosh called upon the Lord for help,<sup>14</sup>  
He hoped, and he received the prophetic (gift).<sup>15</sup>

Ասաց Բ. (2) անկամ աշխարհ կործանին, 4  
Մինն հրով լինի եւ մինն ջրին.<sup>16</sup>  
Շինեաց Բ.(2) արձան, կաւ եւ պղնձին,

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**10** This is a common designator for Satan: see Stone, Timotin 2023, 86 fn. 63 and examples there.

**11** See Gen 4, 3-5. The role of Satan in inspiring Cain to kill Abel is to be found highlighted in the story of the two ravens whom Satan sent to mime the technique of killing in the *Cycle of Four Works* in Recension 2 of *Abel and Cain* §§26-8: see Lipscomb 1990, 272-3 and *Arm Apoc* 7, Annotation 19 'The Raven'. See another version of this story in *Abel and Other Pieces* §3.4 (*Arm Apoc* 2, 148). Satan incites Cain to murder Abel on account of his pleasing sacrifice (among other things) also in the *Cave of Treasure* 5:27, as well as in an unedited Syriac homily attributed to Isaac of Antioch. See Glenthøj 1997, 126-7; 280-1.

**12** This sort of hypostatization of the divine Name is not common in Armenian texts. It is present here because of the way Yovasap', or the traditions upon which he drew, interpreted: "[a]t that time people began (literally: it was begun) to call upon the name of the LORD" in Gen 4, 26. "That time" was the birth of Enosh, son of Seth, and exegetes inferred from the phrase "began to call" that previously, the name of the Lord was forgotten. However, the way "Name" is introduced in 2.3 here shows that it was taken as some sort of hypostasis, to which a sacrifice could be made.

**13** See Gen 4.8. For various traditions concerning the place of the murder, see Glenthøj 1997, 148, but the precise motif found here is not mentioned there. Observe the association of Abel with sheep and fields; after all, he was the shepherd (Gen 4.2). Abel's sacrificial sheep came to play a special role in Armenian parabiblica: see *Arm Apoc* 7, Annotation 15 'Abel's Sheep'.

**14** According to Gen 4.26 [Arm] (following the Septuagint): "He [Enosh] hoped to call upon the name of the Lord God". Compare the similar wording in *History of the Forefathers* §34: "And Enosh hoped to call the name of the Lord God. For, up to him, none was able to call (նչ որ իշխէր կոչել; alternatively: dared to call) the name of the Lord God" (*Arm Apoc* 2, 196-7).

**15** On Enosh, see Fraade 1984; 2002.

**16** The declension in -ի is found in Middle Armenian and, of course, fits the monorhyme here.

Գրեաց զհւր յիշատակն փորեալ յերկոսին.

He said that the earth would be destroyed twice,<sup>17</sup>  
Once being by fire and the other by water.  
He built two pillars,<sup>18</sup> of clay and of bronze,  
He engraved his memory on them both.<sup>19</sup>

Թէ հուրն յառաջ տայցէ, պղինձն հալին. 5  
Իսկ / fol. 278v / կաւն ամրացեալ թրծեալ մնացին,  
Եւ թէ ջուրն գայցէ, կաւն ապականին.  
Իսկ պղինձն մնայ եւ գիրն ի նմին:

If the fire will be given first, the bronze will melt,  
But the clay being baked, strengthened will survive.  
And should the water come, the clay will be deformed,  
But the bronze will remain and the writing on it.

Իսկ Էնոփս, որ փոխեաց Ստեղծողն ի դրախտին, 6  
Վասն այն, զի նա պահեաց զպատուերն Աղամին.  
Տնկեաց այգի, գործեաց ի հասս նորին,  
Եաւթանասուն տարի ծառայեց նմին.

Then Enosh,<sup>20</sup> whom the Creator transferred to the Garden,<sup>21</sup>

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**17** The tradition of two floods and stelae appears also in *History of the Forefathers* §§41-4 (*Arm Apoc* 2, 199-200); *Abel and Other Pieces* §4.4 (*Arm Apoc* 2, 151); *Short Questionnaire* §10.7 (*Arm Apoc* 7). It is attested in Josep., *Antiquities* 1.70-1 as well as in Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* (*LAE*) §§49-50, and numerous other Jewish and Christian sources. The Armenian sources stand out in attributing the prophecy of the two floods to Enosh, rather than to Adam (or Eve); in relating the building of the stelae or pillars to the same Enosh, rather than Seth and his sons; and in describing the stelae as made of bronze and clay, rather than stone and clay. Enosh's prophecy is talked of in connection with the two stelae traditions, see *Arm Apoc* 4, 170 and discussion in *Arm Apoc* 7, Exegetical Note on 10.8. See further Ginzberg 1967-69, 5: 148-50 fn. 53; van der Horst 1994; Feldman 2000, 24-5.

**18** "Pillars" (արձան): thus also in the *History of the Forefathers* 43. *Abel and Other Pieces* 4.4 has "columns" (սիւն). The terms are interchangeable in this context (*Arm Apoc* 2, 198, fn. 40).

**19** There is a multiform tradition telling of the transmission of knowledge in inscriptions from antediluvian time. As early as *Jub* 8:1-5, these antique writings were said to have been found by Kainan, after the flood: see on this tradition, *Arm Apoc* 7, fn. 19 on §13.5. On the topos of the discovery of hidden, antique writings, which is widespread in Late Antiquity and after, see Speyer 1970. On ancient attitudes to monumental, antique, stone inscriptions, see Ben-Dov 2021.

**20** The text reads Էնփս "Enosh", but the following narrative concerns Enoch (Էնփք). These two names are easily confused due to their graphic similarity. See Lipscomb 1990, 62-6 and 63 fn. 7; see *Arm Apoc* 1, 13; *Arm Apoc* 2, 151; *Arm Apoc* 3, 146, and elsewhere.

**21** This is an interpretation of Gen 5, 26.

On account of the fact that he observed Adam's command.<sup>22</sup>  
He planted an orchard and worked for its yield,  
For seventy years he served it.<sup>23</sup>

Իսկ սաղաւարտ ի գլուխն եդեալ կապարի<ն>,<sup>24</sup> 7  
Ոչ նայել ի յերկինս ուխտեաց իւր անձին.  
Եւ ոչ եկեր բնաւ ի պտղոյ դրախտին.  
Այլ տայր այլոց զամենն ամենեւին:

Then he put a leaden helmet on his head,  
He promised himself not to look at the heavens,<sup>25</sup>  
And he ate none of the garden's fruit,<sup>26</sup>  
But gave it all only to others.

Յայնժամ Տէրն ողորմած գդաց<sup>27</sup> ի նմին, 8  
Էբարձ հրեղէն կառօք տարաւ ի դրախտին,  
Որ ժառանկեաց ջանիւ զտեղ հայրենին,  
Էհաս անճառելի փառաց եւ պատւին:

Then the merciful Lord, caring for him,  
Took him up to the Garden, ascending in a fiery chariot.<sup>28</sup>  
Who, by labour, inherited the Paternal place,<sup>29</sup>  
He reached the indescribable glory and honour.<sup>30</sup>

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**22** Enoch planted an orchard but did not eat of its fruit (see below), thus “observing” the commandment which Adam transgressed in the Garden of Eden. See Lipscomb 1990, 62-8 where he discusses in detail the various forms of this tradition of Enoch's Garden. However, the two figures, Enosh and Enoch are woven together in these Adam parabolica, and the matter needs an even broader and more detailed research.

**23** *Ibid.* There is no biblical source for the period of seventy years beyond the function of seventy as a significant number. See *Arm Apoc* 7, fn. 28 on *Questionnaire* 13.7.

**24** This would be the only exception in the whole poem to the monorhyme, so perhaps it should be emended to կապարին.

**25** This incident is found in Lipscomb 1990, 192, 209. Observe that the Armenian parabiblical writings often stress ascetic practices as is also evident in the present context.

**26** That is, the garden he planted: see stanza 6, above.

**27** Orthographic variant of գթաց.

**28** “Garden” here means the heavenly Paradise. There is no biblical reference to Enoch ascending to heaven in a fiery chariot. That is reserved for Elijah: see 2 Kings 2, 11 “And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven”. For Enoch ascending in a chariot, see 3 *Enoch* 6:1 and *Sefer HaYašar, Berešit*. In 1 *Enoch* 52:1, a whirlwind is Enoch's chariot: compare *LAE* [47] (38.4); 2 *Enoch* 3.1; *Book of Zerubbabel* 7 and elsewhere.

**29** This is a reference to the heavenly Paradise or the presence of God.

**30** I.e., of the saints in heaven, as described often in eschatological texts.

Ի յորդոց Ադամայ սակավ<sup>31</sup> գովեցան,  
3  
Յետոյ մոլորեցան եւ խոտորեցան,  
Ամենեքեան հաւասար<sup>32</sup>՝ գԱստուած մոռացան,  
2եխեալ<sup>33</sup> միաբանեալ եւ խառնակեցան:

But few of the sons of Adam were praised.  
Afterwards, they strayed and erred.  
All of them as one forgot God.  
They debauched together and fornicated.<sup>34</sup>

Մինչ յԱդամայ ի վեր ժամանակ<sup>35</sup> անցան.  
10  
ԲՌ. (2,000) տարի եւ Խ. (40) եղան,  
Ետես Տէրն որ յանհուն չարեացն ոչ դարձան  
Հրաման արար Նոյի տապան շինեցան:<sup>36</sup>

Until, after Adam, time passed.  
2,000 years and 40 ensued.<sup>37</sup>  
God saw that they repented not of boundless evils.  
He commanded Noah to build<sup>38</sup> an Ark.

Նոյ եւ Գ. (3) որդին հարսունք միաբան,  
11  
Ը. (8) ոգի կենդանեաւք<sup>39</sup> մտան ի տապան.  
Սահմանք երկնից բացան եւ ջուրք հոսեցան,  
Ջրասոյգ ընկղմեցո աշխարհ<sup>40</sup> միաբան:

**31** Orthographic variant of սակաւ.

**32** Orthographic variant of հաւասար, perhaps used because of the scansion.

**33** Orthographic variant of գեղխեալ.

**34** This refers to the evil of the antediluvian generation, and the stress on sexual sins is notable and typical (cf. Gen 6,2-4; differently Gen 6,11 “all the earth was filled with violence”).

**35** This variation of կ / կք is not uncommon in mediaeval manuscript orthography. See “Index of Repetitive Variants”, no. 333 in Stone, Hillel 2012, 440.

**36** Here, Yovasap' uses a passive ending with active meaning because of the requirements of monorhyme.

**37** Notably in *Arm Apoc* 4, Michael Stone has published chronological texts, e.g., on 31 and 62, in which this figure was 2,242 years. That is in accord with the LXX chronology of the antediluvian generations, which differs from the MT, which enumerates 1656 years from Adam to Noah. On p. 53 of *Arm Apoc* 4, it is 2,223 years and various forms of this chronology are set out in the Tables in *Arm Apoc* 4, 56-7.

**38** The verb-form here is, anomalously, a middle-passive “they were built”. That is caused by the constraints of the rhyme, and we have translated it as an active, *ad sensum*.

**39** Lacuna and blot between ե and ն.

**40** The loss of the h is a not unusual orthographic deviation, see “Index” no. 54 in Stone, Hillel 2012, 423.



Noah and his three sons, together with (their) wives  
8 persons,<sup>41</sup> with (the) animals entered the Ark.  
The heavenly confines opened, and water flowed.<sup>42</sup>  
The whole world was flooded under water.

Տապանն ի վրայ ջրին գայր խաչայնման. 12  
Մինչ աւուրս Խ. (40) ջուրքն հոսեցան,  
Չագռան Էհան ի դուրս, նայ այլոց դարձան,<sup>43</sup>  
Ի հիւսն Անոսիմայ մեռեալ զեխեցան:<sup>44</sup>

The cruciform Ark went on the water,<sup>45</sup>  
The waters flowed for forty days,<sup>46</sup>  
The raven he put out, he returned again,<sup>47</sup>  
It feasted on Anosim the carpenter, who had died.<sup>48</sup>

Նոյ զաղաւնին Էհան ընդ մին պատուհան, 13  
Տերեւով ձիթենոյ շոյտ մի յետ դարձան.

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**41** 1 Pet 3, 20 also mentions that eight people were in the Ark.

**42** In Gen 7, 11, the Hebrew “*בִּמְשֵׁחַ הַשָּׁמַיִם*” (the windows of the heavens; RSV) is translated as “*αἱ καταρράκται τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*” (the cataracts of the sky) by LXX, but as “*սահմանք երկնից*” (the confines [or: borders, limits] of the heavens”) by Arm Genesis. This is what is reflected here and, moreover, the borders are heavenly.

**43** Again, the writer changes the suffix to fit the monorhyme, so for դարձաւ he writes դարձան. This phenomenon may be observed also in 10.4, 13.2, and elsewhere.

**44** Orthographic variant of զեղխեցան:

**45** Typologically the wooden Ark was correlated with the wood of the Cross, and the flood water with the Baptismal water: see Augustine, *contra Faustum* 12.14. In Ephrem Syrus, *Hymn* 49, a connection is made between the cross and the ark: “In its course, it made the sign of its protector – The cross, of its sailor, and the wood, of its navigator, Who came and built for us a Church in the midst of the waters”. Moreover, he says: “In the name of the Trinity, he delivered [the Ark’s] inhabitants: Instead of the dove, the Spirit made its anointing, And [drew] the image of his salvation”. The editor explains: “Reading the motion of the dove in Gn 8.8-11 as cruciform, and of the Genesis narrative as a type of baptism”. See Wickes 2017, 260. Thus, the Ark is seen as a double symbol of redemption. However, the descriptions of the Ark in Armenian tradition present it, not as a Cross, but in the form of a box: see “Form and Structure of Noah’s Ark” in *Arm Apoc* 6, 45-50. Noah’s ark was made of beams forming a square, as the Church is constructed of saints prepared unto every good work: for a square stands firm on any side. This was an ancient view, see: Clements 2010.

**46** These two lines draw upon Gen 7, 17-18, but the order here is reversed.

**47** See Gen 8, 7.

**48** There was a tradition, known in Armenian, that Noah had a workman who helped in building the Ark and this artisan tried to survive the flood by building a room on its roof. However, he drowned and when the raven went forth, it feasted on his corpse. See “Noah and the Cheirograph” in Stone 2021b. The name here is different and the other known source calls him Nersēs.

Ապայ խնդալ Նոյի թէ լոյս ցաթեցան,<sup>49</sup>  
Ելեալ ետես զմեռեալսն դիզան դիզան:

Noah sent the dove through a window.<sup>50</sup>  
It returned quickly with olive leaves.<sup>51</sup>  
Then Noah rejoiced that light dawned,<sup>52</sup>  
Going forth he saw the dead in heaps.

Սարսեց ոզի Նոյի, եմուտ ի տապան, 14  
Մինչեւ հրեշտակն ասաց զխորհուրդ մարդկան,  
Արի շինե աշխարհ, Տեառն է այս հրաման,  
Յայսմհետեւ<sup>53</sup> աղեղն յերկինս քեզ նշան.

Noah's soul trembled, he (re-)entered the Ark,  
Until the angel told the secret<sup>54</sup> to humans,  
"Arise, build the world! This is God's command.  
Henceforth, the bow in the heavens (is) a sign for you."<sup>55</sup>

Գարուն ամառն աշուն ձմռան յանդիման, 15  
Չի չարչարիք կենաւք ի մեղաց խափան,  
Եւ մի լինիք պարապ եւ մեղաց դարան,  
Ջանիւ ապրանք այնել<sup>56</sup> է ձեզ պիտեւան:

Over against winter (there are) spring, summer, autumn,<sup>57</sup>  
For sufferings throughout life prevent sins.  
And be not an empty<sup>58</sup> cupboard of sins,

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**49** Observe the anomalous plural ending, introduced under the constraint of the monorhyme.

**50** Gen 8, 6-8.

**51** Gen 8, 11.

**52** Shlomi Efrati points to *Genesis Rabba* 25:2 (Theodor-Albeck 1912-36, 1: 240-1; Freedman 1977, 207): "Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The planets did not function the entire twelve months [of the Flood]. Rabbi Yonatan said to him: They functioned, but their effect was imperceptible". A similar notion appears also in, e.g., Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 6.13.3, on Gen 8:22: "For during the forty days of rain they had (a continuous) night" (Tonneau 1955, 62; Amar, Mathews 1994, 143).

**53** u above line p.m.

**54** Or: plan, mystery.

**55** Gen 9, 12-17.

**56** Middle Armenian form of առնել.

**57** Cf. Gen 8, 22. The exact sense of յանդիման here is not clear.

**58** Or: "empty of good deeds". Emptiness is a quality often ascribed to sinners.

It is needful for you by effort to prepare supplies".<sup>59</sup>

Զի յառաջ քան գԵոյ նման է գարնան, 16  
Ծառեր անհատ պտղով եւ նոր ծաղկեցան,  
Պտուղ հողոյն լինէր մինն Ռ.(1,000)ան.  
Վասն այն անբանացան. մեղաւք կորան:

For, before Noah, it was like spring,  
The trees fruited unceasingly and flowered anew,  
One fruit of the earth became a thousand-fold,<sup>60</sup>  
Therefore, they became brutish; through sin they perished.

Ելեալ Նոյ եւ շինեաց յառաջ զՆախչվան. 17  
Եւ գերկիր բաժանեց որդոցն յերեսան.  
Իսկ մեծ որդին, որ ծաղր արաւ զՆոյեան,  
Անիծեալ սեւացաւ մարմնով միաբան:

Noah went forth<sup>61</sup> and first built Naxčavan,<sup>62</sup>  
And he divided the earth openly<sup>63</sup> for his sons,  
But the oldest son,<sup>64</sup> who mocked Noah,

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**59** That is, prepare supply for winter (which did not exist until now, see the following stanza). This is the end of the Angel's address to Noah (Nathan Daniel). At the same time, these lines also convey a moral lesson: Avoid sins in this lifetime, thus, by your deeds, preparing yourself for Judgement.

**60** The spring and the continued fruiting and flowering are unusual in Armenian literature as characteristics of the antediluvian period, though they are fixed features of the Garden of Eden: *Arm Apoc* 7, 71-2. However, rabbinic writings commonly depict the generation of the flood as having enjoyed great abundance which caused them to be haughty and sinful. See, e.g., *Tosefta Sota* 3:6-8 (par.); *Genesis Rabba* 26:5 (Theodor-Albeck 1912-36, 1: 248); *Tanhuma Bereshit* 12. The "thousandfold" topos is ancient, and is found in *1 Enoch* 11:19, *2 Baruch* 29:1, 5. See also Papias (Apostolic Fathers) frag. 4 (Roberts, Donaldson 1977, 153-4).

**61** That is: from the Ark.

**62** This is the Armenian tradition: see Lipscomb 1990, 280; Stone 2010, 310.

**63** "Openly, clearly": The reference is to the *Tabula Gentium* in Gen 10, which passage has numerous reverberations in mediaeval Armenian literature. See Stone 1981, 221-8 and further discussion in *Arm Apoc* 7, Annotation 20. That being said, the form յերեսան can also mean "at Yerevan". This line may offer a folk etymology which connects Noah and the division of the earth with Yerevan.

**64** This designation is surprising: The biblical narrative explicitly relates Noah's mockery to "his little son" (Gen 9, 24).

Was cursed, turned black in body, completely.<sup>65</sup>

Աճեալ բազում տոհմիւք եւ յառաջ եկան,  
Լցաւ երկիր կրկին, մարդիք բազմացան.  
Հ.(70) եւ Բ.(2) իշխանք ժողովեցան.  
Յամենայն աշխարհէ ի դաշտին Քաղան.

18

They increased with many families<sup>66</sup> and came forth,  
The earth was filled again, humans multiplied,<sup>67</sup>  
Seventy-two princes gathered together,<sup>68</sup>  
From the whole earth to the plain of Qaḥan.<sup>69</sup>

Ասեն արվի աշխարհ մեղօք գեխեցան,  
Կրկին պիտի լինի ջրհեղեղ մարդկան,  
Յետ Նոյի ԵՃ.(500) ամ հինկ եւ քսան,  
Կամեցան աշտարակ շինել միաբան. / fol. 279r /

19

They said,<sup>70</sup> “Again, the world has become putrid<sup>71</sup> with sin,  
Again, a flood will take place for humans”.  
500 years and twenty-five after Noah,<sup>72</sup>  
They wished to build a Tower together.

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**65** Gen 9, 22: Armenian and other sources struggle with the apparent contradiction arising from Ham's disrespect for Noah but Canaan's being cursed (Gen 9, 35): See *Arm Apoc* 7, §13.4 fn. 17. On blackness resulting from sin and on whiteness or luminosity due to righteousness see *Arm Apoc* 7, Annotation 13 ‘Luminous Garments’. The idea that the wicked have dark or black faces is ancient, see: 4 Ezra 7:124, 1 *Enoch* 46:6, 62:10; *Abot de Rabbi Nathan* A25 (Schechter 1887, 79). See also Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, Poem 10.26 in Srapyan 1958, 224-5.

**66** Or: clans.

**67** Gen 9, 7, 19, etc.

**68** Seventy-two princes are frequently designated as builders of the Tower: see *Arm Apoc* 1, 91, 93; *Arm Apoc* 6, 56, 57 and elsewhere. The number is, as will be shown, connected with the number of languages.

**69** Gen 10, 10; “Tower Texts” 1a 4; 1b 5; 1c 2 in *Arm Apoc* 6, 56-8; Hebrew מִן־הַבְּנֵי־נִמְרֹד. Nimrod was in the foundation story of Babylon and, in Armenian tradition he is identified with Bel, Hayk's opponent. Calne in Isa 10:9 and Amos 6:3 is perhaps a different place, since it is associated with Hamat, which is between Aleppo and Damascus, while this Qaḥan is apparently in Mesopotamia.

**70** “They”: that is, the people of that generation.

**71** Or: debauched itself. Again, variant spelling of գեխեցան. Compare with Grigor Magistros's *Magnalia Dei* (Terian 2012, 40).

**72** This number is found in Armenian chronological texts, with some variations: see, for example, *Arm Apoc* 4, 32, 63. In *Arm Apoc* 1, 83 we see 527, reflecting the common confusion of 5 and 7, due to the method of notation. In *Arm Apoc* 2, 99, we read 515. See also “Tower Texts” 1a 4, etc. in *Arm Apoc* 6, 56, which puts the building of the Tower at 625 years after the Flood.

Բազում ամօք աշխարհի վրայ<sup>73</sup> դատեցան,  
Բարձրացուցին գնա ճամպայ Թ. (9) ամսեան,  
Հսկայքն խորհեցան ի ժամ հեղեղան.  
Ելանել յաշտարակն եւ անփորձ մնան.

20

For many years upon earth they were judged,<sup>74</sup>  
They elevated it to (the height of) 9 months' journey.<sup>75</sup>  
The giants thought at the time of the Flood,  
To climb the Tower and remain (there) unchallenged.<sup>76</sup>

Ոչ կամեցօ ստեղծօղն զխորհուրդն զայն.  
Հողմով ցրեց. հանտարտն<sup>77</sup> որ այ<լ> չիմացան.  
Երբ վաղն լուսացաւ զշինւածն ոչ գտան,  
Եւ ոչ մինն զմիոյն լեզուն հասկացան:

21

The Creator did not want that plan,  
With a wind He scattered (it): they knew not any peace again.<sup>78</sup>  
When the morrow dawned, they found no structure,  
And they understood not each other's tongue.<sup>79</sup>

Մ{մ}իուն անունն Բել եր, Կ. (60) կանկնեան,  
Մեկին Հայկ կոչին, եր նա քառասնեան.  
Մարտեան ընդ միմիանս եւ աղմկեցան.  
Ամեն ազգ իր տոհմոքն<sup>80</sup> իւր աշխարհ դարձան.

22

The name of one was Bêl, 60 cubits (high),  
The other was called Hayk and he was a 40-cubit fellow.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Middle Armenian form of վերայ (see Łazaryan, Avetisyan 1992, s.v.).

<sup>74</sup> The import of this word here is unclear.

<sup>75</sup> In "Tower Text" 1b 3; 1c 3 in *Arm Apoc* 6, 57-8 it is said to be ten months, as is the case in "Tower Text" 2 in *Arm Apoc* 6, 62.

<sup>76</sup> That is, untested by the waters of the flood they anticipated.

<sup>77</sup> Deviant orthography of հանդարտն.

<sup>78</sup> "(it)": the Tower. However, compare Gen 9, 8 where it is the builders of the Tower that are scattered, but the construction is not said to have been destroyed. That understanding is also conceivable here. There are fanciful details on the destruction of the Tower in *Arm Apoc* 6, 66 in "Adam's Language" §6.

<sup>79</sup> This incident, aetiological of course, occasions in some parabiblical narrative sequences such as the introductions to material and texts about the various languages, the 72 tongues, Adam's language, and similar material. See *Arm Apoc* 6, 65.

<sup>80</sup> Sic!

<sup>81</sup> The war of Hayk with Bêl is related in Movsēs Xorenac'i 1.11: see Movses Khorenats'i 2006, 83-4. The heights of the two giants are not mentioned there. See also in the *Primary History* in Sebēos: see Abgarean 1979, 48-50, and translated in Thomson, Howard-Johnston, Greenwood 1999, 83-4.

They battled each other and caused disorder.  
Each nation turned to its own country, with (its) families.

Եւաթանասուն Բ. (2) ազգ, որ կոչեցան, 23  
Չի ՀԲ. (72) իշխանք ժողովեցան,  
Մմէն մէկի լեզու ցեղ մի խաւսեցան,  
Նոցա անւա<մր>ք<sup>82</sup> ազգերն անւանեցան:

(There are) seventy-two nations that were summoned,<sup>83</sup>  
For seventy-two princes gathered together.<sup>84</sup>  
Each<sup>85</sup> tribe spoke each single language  
<By> their names, the nations were called.<sup>86</sup>

Մեկին անուն հապաշ, մեկին հայկազան. 24  
Մեկին յոյնք եւ ֆրանկ, եւ այլն ի լման:  
Նոցա որդոցն անւօքն<sup>87</sup> ամսնին եղան,  
Եւ կամ ի յեղանակ աշնան եւ գարնան:

The name of one was Habaš,<sup>88</sup> of one — Armenian,<sup>89</sup>  
Of one – Greek and Frank, and all the rest.  
Their sons were called by the months' names,  
Or of the seasons, autumn and spring.<sup>90</sup>

Կոապաշտութիւն դարձօ աշխարհ միաբան. 25  
ՉԱրարիչն թողին եւ մոլորեցան.

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**82** William Walk suggests the emendation to *անւաւմք* “by their names” which seems quite appropriate.

**83** The idea of seventy-two nations is widespread. It, and the alternative reading of 70, derive supposedly from a computation of the peoples enumerated in Gen 10. For seventy-two nations and lists thereof, see *Arm Apoc* 2, 158-63; *Arm Apoc* 4, 115-16 fn. 228. In fact, however, both figures are of great numerological significance, being  $10 \times 7$  and  $6 \times 12$ . Another example of the alternation is “the Septuagint” or the seventy as opposed to the 72 translators of the Pentateuch from Hebrew into Greek. See also *Arm Apoc* 7, §13.7 fn. 28. The same variation is to be found relating to the disciples of Christ: Metzger 1959.

**84** For seventy-two nations, see the previous footnote ; for princes, see stanza 18.3.

**85** Literally: one.

**86** The list of the seventy-(two) nations exists as an independent work: see *Arm Apoc* 2, 161-4.

**87** Perhaps an instrumental of *անուն*.

**88** That is, Ethiopia. The text has *Hapaš*.

**89** Literally: “of Hayk”. See stanza 22 and comments there.

**90** The source of these two ideas remains obscure. Such names are not to be found in either the Gregorian or Old Armenian calendar, nor were the seasons called by the names of nations or of Noah's grandsons.

Չանալ<sup>91</sup> կամիմ մեկնել թէ ուստի սկսան.  
Սիրական մեռել է, որ եր մեծ իշխան:

The world, as one, turned to idol worship,  
And leaving the Creator, they strayed. I wish to discern whence  
this separation began: A beloved one had died who was a great  
prince.<sup>92</sup>

Չպատկերն մեռելին հանեց նա նման, 26  
Եւ ոսկով զարդարեց կացոյց յանդիման,  
Յամեն ժամ համբուրեր գողով<sup>93</sup> սիրական,  
Եւ կարաւուն անցնէր սակաւիկ մի քան:

He brought forth an icon in the likeness of the deceased,  
And erecting it in public,<sup>94</sup> all adorned with gold, He kissed it all  
the time, in transports of love  
And his yearning passed, a trifling thing.<sup>95</sup>

Բանասրկուն սատանայ չարեաց գործարան, 27  
Այն որ ըսկսքմանէ<sup>96</sup> հակառակ մարդկան.  
Էմուտ մէջ պատկերին խօսեցաւ մարդկան.  
Մոլորեցոյց զնոսա պաշտաւն դիւական:

The Deceiver Satan, instrument of evil,  
He who from the first (was) an adversary of humankind,<sup>97</sup>  
Entered into the image, spoke with humans.<sup>98</sup>

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**91** This word is not to be found in the chief dictionaries: NBHL, Malxaseanc' 1944-45 and Łazaryan, Avetisyan 1992. It might be an apocopated form of զանազանել "to distinguish" and we have translated it thus. However, one might, perhaps less persuasively, entertain the possibility of a graphic corruption of ջանալ > զանալ. That would be impossible in the hand of the Berlin MS, but perhaps is more plausible in a hand like AAP 172 of the late eighteenth century.

**92** This text continues without a logical or literary break in the next stanza. What is offered is the standard "Euhemeristic" explanation of the origin of idolatry, the roots of which go back to the Hellenistic period. It may be clearly observed in Wisd. Sol. 14:12-31; see the discussion in Winston 1979, 270-1.

**93** Orthographic variant of գողով < գուլթ.

**94** That is, opposite himself, before his own eyes.

**95** The syntax of this line is snarled. It could also, perhaps, be taken as "in short order". Perhaps yearning, in this context, could be taken as "yearning for God".

**96** Odd, perhaps mediaeval form of սկզբանէ.

**97** The line evokes the Creation stories, as does the phrasing, drawn from Gen 1, 1.

**98** This notion, inspired doubtless by ideas of demonic possession, is also reflected in the idea that Satan spoke from the serpent's mouth in the Garden of Eden, which is found in various Armenian sources: see Stone 2008, 141-86, especially 146-8.

He led them astray to demonic worship.<sup>99</sup>

Բազում անթիւ հզաւր հսկայքն, որ եկան, 28  
Եւ կամ շատ թագաւորք զԱստուած ոչ ծանեան.  
Մինչեւ Մելքիսեթէկ այն<sup>100</sup> սուրբ քահանան.  
Եւ ի հայրն Աբրահամ որպէս գրեցան:

The many, unnumbered mighty giants who came forth,<sup>101</sup>  
And many kings, knew not God.  
Until Melchizedek, that holy priest,<sup>102</sup>  
And up to Father Abraham as is written.<sup>103</sup>

Խնարքեմ<sup>104</sup> ի քն Զրիստոս Աստուած միաբան. 29  
փրկեայ զմեզ ի չարեաց կռապաշտութեան.  
Տուր մեզ ըսգաստութիւն ոգի սրբազան.  
Պաշտել զմի Աստուած ըստեղծող մարդկան:

I beseech you Christ, united God,  
Save us from the evil of idolatry.  
O Holy Spirit, give us chastity,<sup>105</sup>  
To minister unto the one God, creator of humankind.

Եւ մեղօք մեռելոյ երգողի զայս բան. 30  
Յովասափ անարժանի լեր աւգնական,  
Տուր ձեռն ապաւինի եւ մի մխիթարան.  
Զի խիստ եմ վշտացել, մեղք իմ բազում կան:

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**99** Note that pagan gods were called demons. See already LXX Deut 32, 17. In Armenian, the word ‘dew’ (դէւ), under Zoroastrian influence came to mean ‘demon’.

**100** j below line p.m.

**101** There are old and varied traditions about giants, including that they were the offspring of the union of fallen angels and human women, which idea was widespread in Jewish and Christian texts from the Second Temple period on. For excellent overviews of this subject, see Reeves, “Enoch”, “Giants, Book of”, “Manichaeans”, “Noah”, in Schiffman, Vanderkam 2000. For a different perspective, see also the interesting article: Bremmer 2004. These are but two representative references out of many.

**102** Melchizedek played a prominent role in the parabiblical embroidered Bible stories: see, of course, Gen 14, 18, Ps. 110, 4, Heb. 5, 6, 5, 10, 7, 1, etc. He is called king and priest in Gen 14, 18, which played a role in developing the Christian exegesis of the bread and wine that he gives to Abraham as the Eucharistic offering. There are several Armenian texts about Melchizedek, see *Arm Apoc* 3, Texts 6 and 7, as well as a translation of the Ps.-Athanasian *History of Melchizedek*; see also Dorfmann-Lazarev 2020.

**103** That is, in the Bible, see preceding footnote.

**104** Variant orthography of խնդրեմ.

**105** Or discretion. Armenian texts regularly set high value on ascetic practices, particularly celibacy and fasting: see stanza 7 and comments there. This is discussed in *Arm Apoc* 7, 140-1, 212-13. Sexual sins figure prominently in many Armenian enumerations of transgressions.



And for the sins of the mortal singer of this poem,  
Yovasap' the unworthy, be a helper,  
Give a trusty hand and not a pitying one,  
For gravely am I afflicted, and many are my sins.

### *Doxology*

Փառօնք ենք զՀոգի Աստուած Հայր եւ Բան,  
Երրեակ եւ մի բնութիւն յօւտան բաժան,  
Ով որ յիշէ զմեզ յիւր հայր մեղան.  
Նայ Տէրն արժան առնէ իւր արքայութեան:

31

We glorify the Spirit, God Father, and the Word,  
The threefold and single nature, eternally distinguished.  
He who remembers us to his Father—I have sinned!  
Him the Lord makes worthy of His kingdom.

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