

Noah's Ark possibly found on world's oldest stone map dating 3,000 years ago, scientists claim

Story by Brooke Steinberg

Scientists have deciphered the world's oldest map — and they believe it may lead them to the location of Noah's Ark.

The 3,000-year-old Babylonian artifact has puzzled archaeologists for centuries, but in the past few weeks, experts have uncovered meaning.

The clay tablet was discovered in the Middle East before being acquired by the British Museum in 1882.



Irving Finkel, curator in charge of cuneiform clay tablets at the British Museum, with the 3,000 year old clay tablet. AP Photo/Sang Tan

Ever since its finding, experts have been trying to decipher what the map-like symbols etched into the artifact could mean.

The tablet has several paragraphs of the cuneiform on its backside and above the map diagram describing the creation of the Earth and what existed beyond it.



The clay tablet was discovered in the Middle East before being acquired by the British Museum in 1882. The British Museum

The carvings have been called the Imago Mundi by scientists who say it shows Ancient Mesopotamia, now known as modern-day Iraq, surrounded by "Bitter River," a double ring marking the borders of the Babylonian's known world.

But after over a month of analyzing the symbols on the tablet, researchers believe they are clear references to stories in the Bible. They claim the back of the artifact acts as a secret key to show travelers the route they will take and what they should look out for on the way.

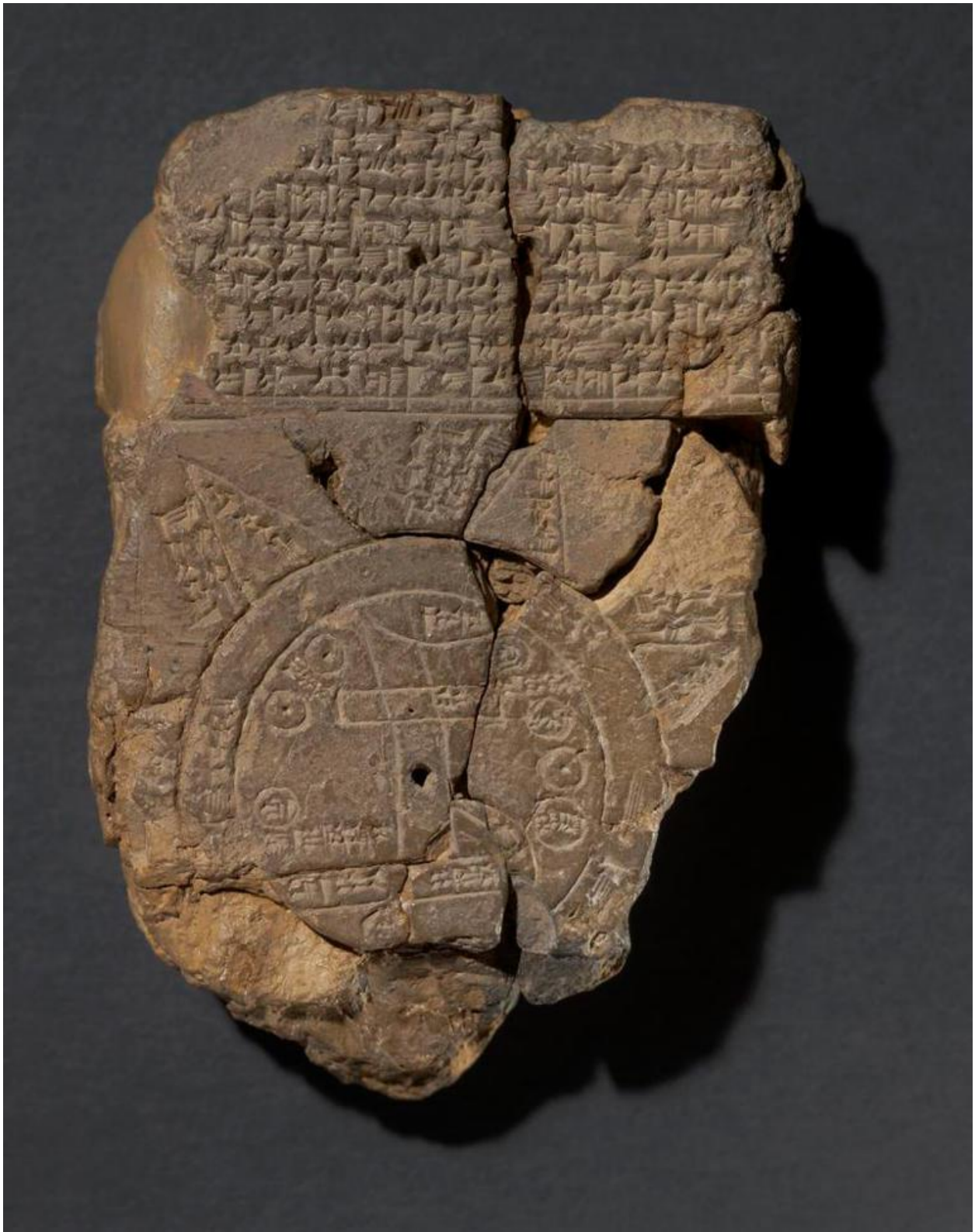


Because it is the description of the Ark which was built, theoretically, by the Babylonian version of Noah," British Museum cuneiform expert Dr. Irving Finkel said. The British Museum

One passage reportedly says that those on the journey must go through "seven leagues to see something that is thick as a parsiktu-vessel."

The word "parsiktu" is meant to help explain the size of a vessel needed to survive the Great Flood, based on other ancient Babylonian scripture.

Another passage is believed to show a path and instructions to get to "Urartu," a place believed to be where a man and his family landed a gigantic ark they made, according to ancient Mesopotamian poems — more commonly referred to as Noah's Ark.



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"Because it is the description of the Ark which was built, theoretically, by the Babylonian version of Noah," British Museum cuneiform expert Dr. Irving Finkel said, according to [The Sun](#).

Urtu, also known as Ararat, is on the top of a mountain in Turkey, and researchers say that it's said to be where the ark sat after the 150-day flood.

"It shows that the story was the same, and of course that one led to the other but also, that from the Babylonian point of view, this was a matter of fact thing," Finkel explained. "That if you did go on this journey you would see the remnants of this historic boat."



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The Biblical story of Noah's Ark closely follows the Babylonian version. In the Babylonian version, the god Ea sent a flood to Earth to destroy all of humanity with the exception of one family. Utnapishtim build a huge ark after being ordered to and filled it with animals.

The six months that followed had terrifying flooding that just Utnapishtim, his family and all the animals on the ark survived. As the flooding ended, they were safely stationed at one of the peaks of Urartu.

"In this account, the details are given and the God says 'You have to do this, this and this' and then the Babylonian Noah says 'I did this, this and this. I've done it!'" Finkel explained. "And I made these structures as thick as a ship's hull."



The Biblical story of Noah's Ark closely follows the Babylonian version. Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Getty Images

While the Gilgamesh Flood story has been recounted by several clay tablets dating back over 3,000 years, the Biblical Flood is said to have been about 5,000 years ago.

Whether the Turkish mountain of Ararat mentioned in the Babylonian story exists is still widely up for debate.

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