Levon Khachikyan was one of the first postgraduate students of the Matenadaran. In 1944 he became Head of the Manuscript House. In 1945 he defended the dissertation titled «Commentary on Genesis by Eghishe» (the 5th century) and received the scientific degree of PhD in history. In 1949-1954 he worked in the Institute of History of Academy of Sciences of Armenian SSR and in the Yerevan Matenadaran after Mesrop Mashtots. In 1954 Levon Khachikyan became the director of the Matenadaran and headed it till the end of his life. The Matenadaran became a scientific research Institute, moved into a new building (1959), scientific departments were established. In 1969 for the publication of the three-volume work «The Colophons of the Armenian Manuscripts of the 15th Century» L. Khachikyan was awarded with the prize named after M. Mashtots. For the first volume of this work he was awarded with the degree of Doctor of History. In 1971 L. Khachikyan was elected a full member of the Academy of Sciences of Armenia.
Eghishe

commentary on genesis
Commentary on Genesis by EGHISHE

Scholarly work by
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Summary

If the Book of Genesis or of the Creation is the beginning of the Bible, then Armenian biblical commentary begins with Eghishe's Commentary on Genesis. Eghishe's Commentary on Genesis is truly the first fruit of Armenian accomplishment in sacred theological literature. As with many other works, it has suffered a difficult fate. For a time it was lost and abandoned in chaos, its original text diffused. It was only through the fortunate accident that still in the tenth century in Armenian ecclesiastical literature, large and small fragments of this original manuscript were preserved in the commentaries on Genesis compiled by the priest David and vardapet Timothy. It is significant that Eghishe's Commentary on Genesis survived in Armenian ecclesiastical literature as far as the tenth century. Vardan Areveltsi produced his compiled commentary on Genesis in the thirteenth century, expanding on the mentioned work of Timothy the "brilliant" vardapet, bringing from it fragments from Eghishe's commentary. Unfortunately, the changes made by Vardan Areveltsi to Timothy vardapet's commentary are today unclear. For this reason one of the most important projects in Armenian studies is the collection and compilation of the preserved fragments of Eghishe's commentary, something that is possible through the research done by Levon Khachikyan. In his scholarly correspondence, he made known the examination of the fragments of Eghishe's commentary, with exemplary rigor and attention to detail befitting a source critic, and carefully combined and recorded with more or less certainty the large and small fragments attributable to Eghishe. The compiled fragments were established in part through marks in the margins apparent to the acute historical philologist ("Platon," "P'ilon," "ashxarhayats'k',' "tiezeragitakan," "davanabanakan," "hmayk'-dits'abanakan," "bnagitakan," "bzhshkakan," "chartasanakan," and others.) These marks indicate that it is necessary to return in the future to historical philological research. On the basis of source critical analysis, many have turned to L. Khachikyan's favored conclusion. The thorough examination of the manuscripts and sources by the scholar has resulted in the conviction that the compiled commentary of Vardan Areveltsi, contained in the Mashtots Matenadaran (=MM) manuscript number 1267 (=A), presents the most original manuscript, for which reason it is right to distinguish this one as "the one to turn to in reconstructing the basis of the original manuscript." The number of expanded or abridged fragments attributed in this manuscript to Eghishe is 71. Comparison of these fragments with the fragments attributed by name to Eghishe in the manuscript MM number 1136 (=B) makes clear that there are fragments that are attributed to other authors in A, -and just the opposite, a group of fragments in B that are attributed to Eghishe in A match those of other authors. Among the compared fragments there are some that were expanded extensively and do not correspond to one another. With regard to the expansions in manuscript A, there are differences compared with the other manuscript. As a consequence of this, a great number of fragments absent from A came to light - "one suspects that several of these fragments were
rooted" in A. In order to resolve the question of the provenance of these dubious fragments, the scholar compared the sources used by Timothy vardapet and Vardan Areveltsi-Ephrem the Syrian, Basil of Caesaria, Philo of Alexandria with the publication of the recognizable commentaries in Genesis. In this way it is possible to settle the question of the provenance of many of the fragments. This question can be solved with relative accuracy when a great part of the fragments are attributed to Eghishe in the ancient manuscripts. The settling of the provenance of the other dubious fragments is not without hope, for the form of the dubious fragments suggests other approaches, kinds of evidence, textual study, and comparison of meaning to determine that the collected fragments certainly belong to Eghishe.

The present publication has as its goal to make available the work prepared by L. Khachikyan, but also to make known aspects of the non-extant original text by including the large and small fragments found to be the work of Eghishe in Vardan Areveltsi's commentary on Genesis, the totality of which allows us to form a tangible image of this work, as well as to connect the traditions of Armenian biblical exegesis with those of the Alexandrian school of allegorical interpretation. The fragments of the at times extended interpretation, which are pieces of the ruined, Armenian-built "temple," are wonders that the present-day reader can inspect, instilling admiration by the subtle comparisons contained within them, penetrating the depths of the teaching of the past traditions of the theological mind, and bearing .

In the preparation of the publication of this manuscript, I have preserved the ancient writing forms. From the perspective of orthography I follow Levon Khachikyan's notes and critical remarks. These notes and manuscript and source critical remarks are presented in "Introductions-Annual Lectures." At the end of the work I have added a list of words in Eghishe's commentary on Genesis that do not appear in the Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազեան Լեզուի (New Lexicon of the Armenian Language) and indicate the place in the Bible that the commentary in which the word is found is on.

HAKOB KYOSEYAN

*Extracts from book Commentary on Genesis by Eghishe*
“And Noah did everything that the Lord commanded him to do.”

This is praise of the just one, for he did not just do a part but everything, and he did not build the ark in some other fashion but just as God commanded him. His work lasted a hundred years, as did the word and fame of the workers wielding axes and carrying hammers and planes, furnished with iron and copper nails, and beating them with hammers, and the sound of the work filled the whole world. At night God sent the light and radiance of the moon, and during the day he diminished the brilliance of the sun upon the copper and iron. The questioning and doubts and explanations and sorrow and fright among men and women and children, and the power of the creator’s solicitude touched their hearts. But their hard-heartedness and customary hedonism overcame them and they ridiculed and mocked him increasingly, and ate, he says, and drank at weddings and became husbands and took wives until the day in which Noah entered the ark, and being drunk with debauchery they did not understand.

“Then God said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and all your household. And take seven pairs of all clean animals, and two pairs of all unclean, male and female, for I have seen that you alone from this entire generation are right-eous before me.”’ (7:1)

All creatures of God are holy, but the ones that men chose were unclean or deformed or injurious or very big or small. These were the ones that he said to choose, clean and unclean, the distinction which he established after the law. Now he counted the hundred years sufficiently and waited patiently for those who according to their unrepentant hearts called the treasure of the anger of God upon themselves. For this reason he commanded Noah to enter and lead the clean animals sevenfold, because he will sacrifice the seventh one, and so that they will grow and become food for man, which had been commanded, but also the unclean ones eat from them. But he commanded that lead the unclean ones twofold lest they become troublesome and frightened and kill the men and the clean animals. Because he is the righteous judge, he says, “I see that you are righteous.” (7:1) Because of this, you alone will live, and this generation will die. And of this generation, the one who will come will announce that righteousness is the giver of life and wickedness is the bringer of death. The one who knew Jeremiah before the creation, and chose the righteous before the world came into existence (Ephesians 1:4), testified that Noah is righteous and worthy of life. The most merciful one moreover adds a certain piece of information and says,

“for in seven days I will send rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out every living thing that I have created upon the earth.” (7:4) After permitting such a multitude of sin and so many years of evil, he proclaims that they only have seven days in which to repent and seek forgiveness. Why after seven days does he bring the flood upon the earth if not because of the same will that is full of all goodness?

“Noah did everything that God commanded him to do.” (7:5) Now he tests a second time that he did everything that had been commanded, for if he kept the things not commanded by word, having learned what is pleasing to God by nature, how much more fully did he complete the things that were commanded?

“Noah was 600 years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth.” (7:6) Before the birth of his children and his receiving the command to build the ark, he said that he was 500 years old, and at the time that he entered the ark, he was 600 years old. He said this to show with certainty that the time between God’s tolerance and the completing of the ark’s building was 100 years.

“Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives went into the ark in order to escape the flood of waters, and the animals mentioned went in.” (7:7) The smell of life pervaded the ark. Such a sweet smell pervaded the ark that the pasturing animals forgot their pastures and the predators forgot their prey. And immediately they ran toward the sweet odor, and until they
arrived at their place, none were able to take their place and station. The weaker ones had no fear of the stronger and the plundering ones did not remember their usual habits. A heavenly sound and the command of the heavenly king became audible, and they ran inside. But Noah received everything in order in the ark and barred the others, but they did not leave from that place until the end of the seventh day, and at the beginning of the rain, at which time with roaring and bellowing and howling, they went forth.

"And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth." (7:10)

There is no measure of God's compassion, for even after they went into the ark there were still seven more days in which he granted pardon in order to allow for penance.

"In the 600th year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the fountains of the deep overflowed and the cascades of heaven opened. And rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights." (7:11-12)

The first month in Hebrew is Nisan, which according to us is Areg. The second month is Iyar, which for us is Ahelkan.

"The fountains of the deep overflowed and the cascades of heaven opened." By this word they scattered up and down, by the same word they truly opened and overflowed so that the overflowing became immense and unstoppable. "Cascades," which is the border that he placed to stand on the firmament and under the waters, to this place you will come. And they were carried through one passage for 40 days and 40 nights. And because it is on the 40th day that the essence of the male forms in the womb, it takes the same number to be corrupted. Adding the nights to them gives 80, the animation of the female, so that the salvific number has turned into death, into destruction and rain.

"And the Lord God shut the ark from outside." (7:16), for if Noah were to have compassion upon anyone, after being shut inside he could no longer receive them. Thus, mercy was removed from the impetuous. The water increased and lifted the ark, which was raised from the earth (7:17).

God was able to protect Noah from every angle, just as he allowed Enoch to escape death, but the almighty power of God was reputed to be weakness. In this way he agreed to lift up the heaviness of the body as if to take up the world with a piece of wood of little value, revealing the hope that when the body is revived, it will walk in heaven.

Just as the salt waters of the sea are taken up by the air and scatter again on the earth, they do not change its nature but clean the rustiness of the sea. Likewise it does not corrupt the beauty of the first building but renews its decay through the air, which is purer.

It was unsuitable in the beginning for the Spirit of the Lord to convert
81-2

"But the Lord God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the reptiles and all the birds."

The one who never forgets, he says, remembered Noah. He returned to the mercy from which he did not depart and he made a wind to blow and caused the waters to subside. If water subsides through wind, the sea would have dried out long time ago. But one must understand that this happened through the Holy Spirit, which does not abate to come in the name and in the rank of His creatures, and is called by the word and voice and air and wind to his creative love.

"The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed" (8:2), for the creatures waited and expected the creator to change the boundaries, the God is the cause of change and order.

83-8

"And the water receded after a day and the ark rested in the seventh month on the 27th day of the month on the mountain of Sararad, that is Ararat. And the water continued to abate until the tenth month."

Some say that the mountain of Ararat is in Gordyene, but the truth clearly makes it be Maris. There is in Palestine and in Cappadocia an Ararat, but our Ayarat is understood. For with two rivers and the ark we are very much more above the others. And what use is it? First, it is a cause of wisdom in us, to keep the memory of God’s creation unceasingly, and to expect change in the same. And then we have three intercessors with God, because the one who was the cause of the salvation of one house will also be the Savior for us. And the rivers are hosts for us, for we will go to the source from which these also come. The seventh months are Nisan and Tishrei, and the five months between them are 150 days.

"And in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared." (8:5) No one saw them, but the Lord opened the tops of the mountains after the 150 days of the receding water. And the second day of the month was the beginning. After 40 days, Noah opened the window of the ark. Eleven months and ten days having passed, in the twelfth month, Noah opened the window of the ark.

"Then he sent out the crow and it went forth and did not return." (8:7) It is because the raven was praised as an angelic messenger and informer that it was dispatched. "and did not return": because it was a kind of evil to be expelled from the spirit of the wise and the church, and fall with the corpse beside a mountain or be lost in the water, as they say of the evil spirits of sinners. It did not return until the waters were dried up; it is not that it returned after this, but it is a fashion of writing to use "until" to indicate an indeterminate time.

"And then he sent out the dove to see..." (8:8) He sends out the simple and cohabiting bird. And it returns from there when its feet do not know rest, because it was still filled with water and because the dove does not like to be immersed by water, it returned to the ark.