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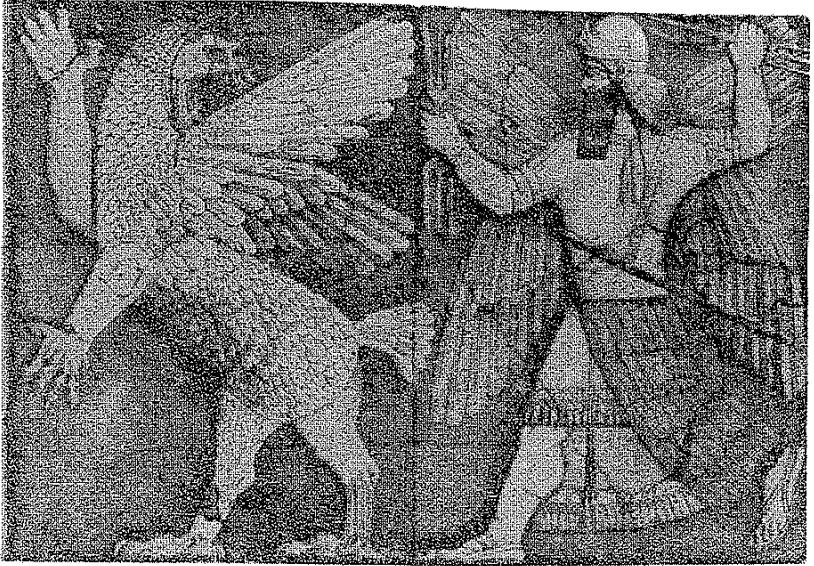
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*Myths from Mesopotamia*  
*Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh,*  
*and Others*

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*with an Introduction and Notes by*  
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*Revised edition*



Ninurta attacks Anzu to regain the stolen Tablet of Destinies. From a stone sculpture found in the temple of Ninurta at Nimrud, Iraq. (Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh*, II, plate 5)

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# ATRAHASIS

TABLET I

OBV I When the gods instead of man<sup>1</sup>  
 Did the work, bore the loads,  
 The gods' load was too great,  
 The work too hard, the trouble too much,<sup>2</sup>  
 The great Anunnaki made the Igigi  
 Carry the workload sevenfold.<sup>3</sup>  
 Anu their father was king,  
 Their counsellor warrior Ellil,  
 Their chamberlain was Ninurta,  
 Their canal-controller Ennugi.  
 They took the box (of lots) . . . .  
 Cast the lots; the gods made the division.<sup>4</sup>  
 Anu went up to the sky,  
 [And Ellil (?) ] took the earth for his people (?).  
 The bolt which bars the sea  
 Was assigned to far-sighted Enki.<sup>5</sup>  
 When Anu had gone up to the sky,  
 [And the gods of] the Apsu had gone below,  
 The Anunnaki of the sky  
 Made the Igigi bear the workload.  
 The gods had to dig out canals,  
 Had to clear channels, the lifelines of the land,  
 The Igigi had to dig out canals,  
 Had to clear channels, the lifelines of the land.  
 The gods dug out the Tigris river (bed)  
 And then dug out the Euphrates.  
 [ ] in the deep  
 [ ] they set up  
 [ ] the Apsu  
 [ ] of the land  
 [ ] inside it  
 [ ] raised its top  
 [ ] of all the mountains  
 They were counting the years of loads;

I ] the great marsh,  
 They were counting the years of loads.  
 For 3,600 years they bore the excess,  
 Hard work, night and day.  
 They groaned and blamed each other,  
 Grumbled over the masses of excavated soil.<sup>6</sup>  
 'Let us confront our [ ] the chamberlain,  
 And get him to relieve us of our hard work!  
 Come, let us carry [the Lord (?)],  
 The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his  
 dwelling.  
 Come, let us carry [Ellil],  
 The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his  
 dwelling.'  
 Then Alla made his voice heard<sup>7</sup>  
 And spoke to the gods his brothers, (*gap of about 8 lines*)  
 ii 'Come! Let us carry  
 The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his  
 dwelling.  
 Come! Let us carry Ellil,  
 The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his  
 dwelling.  
 Now, cry battle!  
 Let us mix fight with battle!<sup>8</sup>  
 The gods listened to his speech,  
 Set fire to their tools,  
 Put aside their spades for fire,  
 Their loads for the fire-god,  
 They flared up. When they reached  
 The gate of warrior Ellil's dwelling,  
 It was night, the middle watch,  
 The house was surrounded, the god had not  
 realized.  
 It was night, the middle watch,  
 Ekur was surrounded, Ellil had not realized.  
 Yet Kalkal was attentive, and had it closed,  
 He held the lock and watched [the gate].  
 Kalkal roused [Nusku].  
 They listened to the noise of [the Igigi].  
 Then Nusku roused his master,

Made him get out of bed:  
 'My lord, your house is surrounded,  
 A rabble is running around your door!  
 Ellil, your house is surrounded,  
 A rabble is running around your door!<sup>9</sup>  
 Ellil had weapons brought to his dwelling.  
 Ellil made his voice heard  
 And spoke to the vizier Nusku,  
 'Nusku, bar your door,  
 Take up your weapons and stand in front of me.'  
 Nusku barred his door,  
 Took up his weapons and stood in front of Ellil.  
 Nusku made his voice heard  
 And spoke to the warrior Ellil,  
 'O my lord, your face is (sallow as) tamarisk!<sup>10</sup>  
 Why do you fear your own sons?  
 O Ellil, your face is (sallow as) tamarisk!  
 Why do you fear your own sons?  
 Send for Anu to be brought down to you,  
 Have Enki fetched into your presence.'  
 He sent for Anu to be brought down to him,  
 Enki was fetched into his presence,  
 Anu king of the sky was present,  
 Enki king of the Apsu attended.  
 The great Anunnaki were present.  
 Ellil got up and the case was put.  
 Ellil made his voice heard  
 And spoke to the great gods,  
 'Is it against me that they have risen?  
 Shall I do battle...?  
 What did I see with my own eyes?  
 A rabble was running around my door!<sup>11</sup>  
 Anu made his voice heard  
 And spoke to the warrior Ellil,  
 'Let Nusku go out  
 And [find out] word of the Igigi  
 Who have surrounded your door.  
 A command...  
 To...'  
 Ellil made his voice heard

And spoke to the vizier Nusku,  
 'Nusku, open your door,  
 Take up your weapons [and stand before me!]  
 In the assembly of all the gods,  
 Bow, then stand [and tell them],  
 "Your father Anu,  
 Your counsellor warrior Ellil,  
 Your chamberlain Ninurta  
 And your canal-controller Ennugi<sup>9</sup>  
 Have sent me to say,  
 Who is in charge of the rabble?  
 Who is in charge of the fighting?  
 Who declared war?  
 Who ran to the door of Ellil?"'  
 [Nusku opened] his door,  
 [Took up his weapons,] went [before (?)] Ellil  
 In the assembly of all the gods  
 [He bowed], then stood and told the message.  
 Your father Anu,  
 Your counsellor warrior Ellil,  
 Your chamberlain Ninurta  
 And your canal-controller Ennugi  
 Have sent me to say,  
 "Who is in charge of the rabble?  
 Who is in charge of the fighting?  
 Who declared war?  
 Who ran to the door of Ellil?"'  
 Ellil [ ]  
 'Every single one of us gods declared war!  
 We have put [a stop] to the digging.  
 The load is excessive, it is killing us!  
 Our work is too hard, the trouble too much!  
 So every single one of us gods  
 Has agreed to complain to Ellil.'  
 Nusku took his weapons,  
 Went [and returned to Ellil]  
 'My lord, you sent me to [ ]  
 I went [ ]  
 I explained [ ]

[ ]  
 Saying, "Every single one of us gods  
 Declared war.  
 We have put [a stop] to the digging.  
 The load is excessive, it is killing us,  
 Our work is too hard, the trouble too much,  
 So every single one of us gods  
 Has agreed to complain to Ellil!"'  
 Ellil listened to that speech.  
 His tears flowed.  
 Ellil spoke guardedly (?),  
 Addressed the warrior Anu,  
 'Noble one, take a decree  
 With you to the sky, show your strength—  
 While the Anunnaki are sitting before you  
 Call up one god and let them cast him for  
 destruction!'  
 Anu made his voice heard  
 And spoke to the gods his brothers,  
 'What are we complaining of?  
 Their work was indeed too hard, their trouble was  
 too much.  
 Every day the earth (?) [resounded (?)].  
 The warning signal was loud enough, we kept  
 hearing the noise.  
 [ ] do  
 [ ] tasks (?)  
 (gap partly filled, partly overlapped  
 by the following two SBV fragments)  
 ' (While) the Anunnaki are sitting before you,  
 And (while) Belet-ili the womb-goddess is  
 present,  
 Call up one and cast him for destruction!'  
 Anu made his voice heard and spoke to [Nusku],  
 'Nusku, open your door, take up your weapons,  
 Bow in the assembly of the great gods, [then  
 stand]  
 And tell them [ ]  
 "Your father Anu, your counsellor warrior Ellil,

Your chamberlain Ninurta and your canal-  
controller Ennugi

Have sent me to say,  
Who is in charge of the rabble? Who will be in  
charge of battle?

Which god started the war?

A rabble was running around my door!''

When Nusku heard this,

He took up his weapons,

Bowed in the assembly of the great gods, [then  
stood]

And told them [ ].

Your father Anu, your counsellor warrior Ellil,  
Your chamberlain Ninurta and your canal-  
controller Ennugi

Have sent me to say,

"Who is in charge of the rabble? Who is in  
charge of the fighting?

Which god started the war?

A rabble was running around Ellil's door."

(gap of uncertain length)

SBV

Ea made his voice heard

And spoke to the gods his brothers,

"Why are we blaming them?

Their work was too hard, their trouble was too  
much.

Every day the earth (?) [resounded (?)].

The warning signal was loud enough, [we kept  
hearing the noise.]

There is [ ]

Belet-ili the womb-goddess is present—

Let her create primeval man

So that he may bear the yoke [( )].

So that he may bear the yoke, [the work of Ellil],

Let man bear the load of the gods!

(gap)

OBV

'Belet-ili the womb-goddess is present,  
Let the womb-goddess create offspring,

And let man bear the load of the gods!'

They called up the goddess, asked

The midwife of the gods, wise Mami,

'You are the womb-goddess (to be the) creator of  
mankind!'

Create primeval man, that he may bear the yoke!

Let him bear the yoke, the work of Ellil,

Let man bear the load of the gods!'

Nintu made her voice heard

And spoke to the great gods,

"It is not proper for me to make him.

The work is Enki's;

He makes everything pure!

If he gives me clay, then I will do it.'

Enki made his voice heard

And spoke to the great gods,

'On the first, seventh, and fifteenth of the month  
I shall make a purification by washing.

Then one god should be slaughtered.

And the gods can be purified by immersion.

Nintu shall mix clay

With his flesh and his blood.

Then a god and a man

Will be mixed together in clay.

Let us hear the drumbeat forever after,<sup>10</sup>

Let a ghost come into existence from the god's  
flesh,<sup>11</sup>

Let her proclaim it as his living sign,<sup>12</sup>

And let the ghost exist so as not to forget (the  
slain god).'

They answered 'Yes!' in the assembly,

The great Anunnaki who assign the fates.

On the first, seventh, and fifteenth of the month

He made a purification by washing.

Ilawela who had intelligence,<sup>11</sup>

They slaughtered in their assembly.

Nintu mixed clay

With his flesh and blood.

They heard the drumbeat forever after.

A ghost came into existence from the god's flesh,  
And she (Nintu) proclaimed it as his living sign.  
v The ghost existed so as not to forget (the slain god).

After she had mixed that clay,  
She called up the Anunnaki, the great gods.

The Igigi, the great gods,

Spat spittle upon the clay.

Mami made her voice heard

And spoke to the great gods,

'I have carried out perfectly

The work that you ordered of me.

You have slaughtered a god together with his  
intelligence.

I have relieved you of your hard work,

I have imposed your load on man.

You have bestowed noise on mankind.

I have undone the fetter and granted freedom.'

They listened to this speech of hers.<sup>13</sup>

And were freed (from anxiety), and kissed her feet:

'We used to call you Mami:

But now your name shall be Mistress of All

Gods.'

Far-sighted Enki and wise Mami

Went into the room of fate.

The womb-goddesses were assembled.

He trod the clay in her presence;<sup>14</sup>

She kept reciting an incantation,

For Enki, staying in her presence, made her recite

it.

When she had finished her incantation,

She pinched off fourteen pieces (of clay),

(And set) seven pieces on the right,

Seven on the left.

Between them she put down a mud brick.<sup>15</sup>

She made use of (?) a reed, opened it (?) to cut the

umbilical cord,<sup>16</sup>

Called up the wise and knowledgeable

Womb-goddesses, seven and seven.

Seven created males,

Seven created females,

For the womb-goddess (it) creator of fate.  
He ...-ed them two by two,<sup>17</sup>

...-ed them two by two in her presence.

Mami made (these) rules for people.<sup>18</sup>

'In the house of a woman who is giving birth

The mud brick shall be put down for seven days.

Belet-ili, wise Mami shall be honoured.

The midwife shall rejoice in the house of the

woman who gives birth

And when the woman gives birth to the baby,

The mother of the baby shall sever herself.

A man to a girl [ ] her bosom!<sup>19</sup>

[ ] her bosom!<sup>19</sup>

A beard can be seen (?)

On a young man's cheek.

In gardens and waysides

A wife and her husband choose each other.'

The womb-goddesses were assembled

And Nintu was present. They counted the months,

Called up the tenth month as the term of fates.

When the tenth month came,

She slipped in (?) a staff and opened the womb.<sup>20</sup>

Her face was glad and joyful.

She covered her head,

Performed the midwifery,

Put on her belt, said a blessing.

She made a drawing in flour and put down a mud

brick:

'I myself created (it), my hands made (it).

The midwife shall rejoice in the house of the

*gadištu*-priestess.

Wherever a woman gives birth

And the baby's mother severs herself,

The mud brick shall be put down for nine days.

Nintu the womb-goddess shall be honoured.

She shall call their ... "Mami!"<sup>21</sup>

She shall [ ] the womb-goddess,

Lay down the linen cloth (?).

When the bed is laid out in their house,

A wife and her husband shall choose each other.

Ishtar shall rejoice in the wife-husband relationship

In the father-in-law's house.

Celebration shall last for nine days,

And they shall call Ishtar "Ishhara".

[On the fifteenth day (?)], the fixed time of fate  
She shall call [ ]

(gap of about 23 lines)

A man [ ]

Clean the home [ ]

The son to his father [ ]

They sat and [ ]

He was carrying [ ]

He saw [ ]

vii  
Ellil [ ]

They took hold of ...

Made new picks and spades,

Made big canals

To feed people and sustain the gods.

(gap of about 13 lines)

600 years, less than 600, passed,<sup>22</sup>

And the country became too wide, the people too numerous.

The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.

The God grew restless at their racket,

Ellil had to listen to their noise.

He addressed the great gods,

'The noise of mankind has become too much,

I am losing sleep over their racket.

Give the order that *šuruppu*-disease shall break out,

(gap of about 3 lines)

Now there was one Atrahasis

Whose ear was open (to) his god Enki.

He would speak with his god

And his god would speak with him.

Atrahasis made his voice heard  
And spoke to his lord,

'How long (?) [will] the gods make us suffer? Will they make us suffer illness forever?'

Enki made his voice heard

And spoke to his servant:

'Call the elders, the senior men!<sup>23</sup>

Start [an uprising] in your own house,

Let heralds proclaim ...

Let them make a loud noise in the land:  
Do not revere your gods,<sup>24</sup>

Do not pray to your goddesses,

But search out the door of Namtara.

Bring a baked loaf into his presence.

May the flour offering reach him,

May he be shamed by the presents

And wipe away his "hand".<sup>25</sup>

Atrahasis took the order,

Gathered the elders to his door.

Atrahasis made his voice heard

And spoke to the elders,

'I have called the elders, the senior men!

Start [an uprising] in your own house,

Let heralds proclaim ...

Let them make a loud noise in the land:  
Do not revere your gods!

Do not pray to your goddesses!

Search out the door of Namtara.

Bring a baked loaf into his presence.

May the flour offering reach him;

May he be shamed by the presents

And wipe away his "hand".

The elders listened to his speech;

They built a temple for Namtara in the city.

Heralds proclaimed ...

They made a loud noise in the land.

They did not revere their god,

Did not pray to their goddess,

But searched out the door of Namtara,

Brought a baked loaf into his presence.

viii

The flour offering reached him.  
And he was shamed by the presents.

And wiped away his 'hand'.

The šuruppu-disease left them,

[The gods] went back to their [(regular) offerings]

(2 lines missing to end of column)

(Catchline)  
600 years, less than 600 passed.

## TABLET II

OBV i 600 years, less than 600, passed<sup>26</sup>  
And the country became too wide, the people too numerous.

The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.

The God grew restless at their clamour,

Ellil had to listen to their noise.

He addressed the great gods,

'The noise of mankind has become too much.

I am losing sleep over their racket.

Cut off food supplies to the people!

Let the vegetation be too scant for their hunger!<sup>27</sup>

Let Adad wipe away his rain.

Below (?) let no flood-water flow from the springs.

Let wind go, let it strip the ground bare,

Let clouds gather (but) not drop rain,

Let the field yield a diminished harvest,

Let Nissaba stop up her bosom.

No happiness shall come to them.

Let their [ ] be dejected.'

(gap of about 34 lines to end of column)

ii (gap of about 12 lines at beginning of column)

'Call the [elders, the senior men],

Start an uprising in your house,

Let heralds proclaim ...

Let them make a loud noise in the land:

Do not revere your god(s)!

Do not pray to your goddess!

Search out the door of Adad,

Bring a baked loaf into his presence.

May the flour offering reach him,

May he be shamed by the presents

And wipe away his 'hand'!

(Then) he will make a mist form in the morning

And in the night he will steal out and make dew

drop.

Deliver (?) the field (of its produce) ninefold, like

a thief.<sup>28</sup>

They built a temple for Adad in the city,

Ordered heralds to proclaim

And make a loud noise in the land.

They did not revere their god(s),

Did not pray to their goddess,

But searched out the door of Adad,

Brought a baked (loaf) into his presence.

The flour offering reached him;

He was shamed by the presents

And wiped away his 'hand'.

He made mist form in the morning

And in the night he stole out and made dew drop,

Delivered (?) the field (of its produce) ninefold, like

a thief.

[The drought] left them,

[The gods] went back [to their (regular) offerings].

Not three epochs had passed.

The country became too wide, the people too numerous.

The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.

The gods grew restless at their noise.

Ellil organized his assembly again,

Addressed the gods his sons:

'The noise of mankind has become too much,

Sleep cannot overtake me because of their racket.

Command that Anu and Adad keep the (air)

above (earth) locked,

Sin and Nergal keep the middle earth locked.



As for the bolt that bars the sea,  
 Ea with his *lahmu*-creatures shall keep it locked.  
 He ordered, and Anu and Adad kept the (air) above  
 (earth) locked.  
 Sin and Nergal kept the middle earth locked.  
 As for the bolt that bars the sea,  
 Ea with his *lahmu*-creatures kept it locked.  
 Then the very wise man Atra-hasis  
 wept daily.  
 He would carry a *maššaku*-offering along the  
 riverside pasture.  
 Although the irrigation-water was silent.  
 Half-way through the night he offered a sacrifice.  
 As sleep began to overtake him (?)  
 He addressed the irrigation-water:  
 'May the irrigation-water take it, may the river  
 carry it,  
 May the gift be placed in front of Ea my lord.  
 May Ea see it and think of me!  
 So may I see a dream in the night.'  
 When he had sent the message by water,  
 He sat facing the river, he wept (?),  
 The man wept (?) facing the river  
 As his plea went down to the Apsu.  
 Then Ea heard his voice.  
 [He summoned his *lahmu*-creatures] and addressed  
 them.

(for the next 36 lines see Supplement 1 on pp. 338-9)

OBEV iv Above, [rain did not fill the canals (?)]  
 Below, flood-water did not flow from the springs.  
 Earth's womb did not give birth,  
 No vegetation sprouted ...  
 People did not look [ ]  
 The dark pastureland was bleached,  
 The broad countryside filled up with alkali.<sup>30</sup>  
 In the first year they ate old grain  
 In the second year they depleted the storehouse.<sup>31</sup>  
 When the third year came,  
 Their looks were changed by starvation,

Their faces covered with scabs (?) like malt.  
 They stayed alive by ... life.  
 Their faces looked sorrow.  
 They went out in public hunched,  
 Their well-set shoulders slouched,  
 Their upstanding bearing bowed.  
 They took a message [from Atrahasis to the gods].  
 In front of [the assembly of the great gods],  
 They stood [and ]  
 The orders [of Atrahasis they repeated] ]  
 In front of [ ]

(gap of about 32 lines to end of column)

SBV

iv [600 years, less than 600 years, passed.  
 The country became too wide, the people too  
 numerous.]  
 He grew restless at their noise.  
 Sleep could not overtake him because of their  
 racket.  
 Eлли organized his assembly,  
 Addressed the gods his sons,  
 'The noise of mankind has become too much.  
 I have become restless at their noise.  
 Sleep cannot overtake me because of their racket.  
 Give the order that *šuruppu*-disease shall break  
 out,  
 Let Namar put an end to their noise straight  
 away!  
 Let sickness: headache, *šuruppu*, *ašaku*,  
 Blow in to them like a storm.'  
 They gave the order, and *šuruppu*-disease did break  
 out.  
 Namar put an end to their noise straight away.  
 Sickness: headache, *šuruppu*, *ašaku*,  
 Blew into them like a storm.  
 The thoughtful man, Atrahasis<sup>32</sup>  
 Kept his ear open to his master Ea;  
 He would speak with his god,

[And his god (?) Ea would speak with him.  
Atrahasis made his voice heard and spoke,  
Said to Ea his master,

'Oh Lord, people are grumbling!  
Your [sickness] is consuming the country!  
Oh Lord Ea, people are grumbling!  
[Sickness] from the gods is consuming the  
country!

Since you created us  
[You ought to] cut off sickness: headache,  
*šuruppu* and *ašakku*.<sup>33</sup>

Ea made his voice heard and spoke,  
Said to Atrahasis,

'Order the heralds to proclaim,  
To make a loud noise in the land:  
Do not revere your gods,

Do not pray to your goddesses!  
[ ] withhold his rites!  
[ ] the flour as an offering  
[ ] to her presence  
[ ] say a prayer  
[ ] the presents [ ]

his "hand",  
Elli organized his assembly,  
Addressed the gods his sons,

'You are not to inflict disease on them again,  
(Even though) the people have not diminished—  
they are more than before!

I have become restless at their noise,  
Sleep cannot overtake me because of their racket!  
Cut off food from the people,  
Let vegetation be too scant for their stomachs!  
Let Adad on high make his rain scarce,  
Let him block below, and not raise flood-water  
from the springs!

Let the field decrease its yield,  
Let Nissaba turn away her breast,  
Let the dark fields become white,  
Let the broad countryside breed alkali  
Let earth clamp down her teats

So that no vegetation sprouts, no grain grows.  
Let *ašakku* be inflicted on the people,  
Let the womb be too tight to let a baby out!

They cut off food for the people,  
Vegetation . . . became too scant for their stomachs.  
Adad on high made his rain scarce,  
Blocked below, and did not raise flood-water from  
the springs.

The field decreased its yield,  
Nissaba turned away her breast,  
The dark fields became white,  
The broad countryside bred alkali.  
Earth clamped down her teats:

No vegetation sprouted, no grain grew.  
*Ašakku* was inflicted on the people.

The womb was too tight to let a baby out.  
Ea kept guard over the bolt that bars the sea,  
Together with his *lahmu*-heroes.

Above, Adad made his rain scarce,  
Blocked below, and did not raise flood-water from  
the springs.

The field decreased its yield,  
Nissaba turned away her breast,  
The dark fields became white,  
The broad countryside bred alkali.  
Earth clamped down her teats:

No vegetation sprouted, no grain grew.  
*Ašakku* was inflicted on the people,  
The womb was too tight to let a baby out.

(gap of 2 lines)

When the second year arrived  
They had depleted the storehouse.

When the third year arrived  
[The people's looks] were changed [by starvation].  
When the fourth year arrived

Their upstanding bearing bowed,  
Their well-set shoulders slouched,  
People went out in public hunched over.  
When the fifth year arrived,

A daughter would eye her mother coming in;  
A mother would not even open her door to her daughter.

A daughter would watch the scales (at the sale of her) mother,  
A mother would watch the scales (at the sale of her) daughter.

When the sixth year arrived  
They served up a daughter for a meal,  
Served up a son for food.

Only one or two households were left.  
Their faces were covered with scabs (?) like malt.  
People stayed alive by . . . life.

The thoughtful man Atrahasis  
Kept his ear open to his master Ea.  
He would speak with his god,  
And his god Ea would speak with him.  
He left the door of his god,  
Put his bed right beside the river,  
(For even) the canals were quite silent.

(gap of about 25 lines)

vi When the second year arrived, they had depleted the storehouse.

When the third year arrived  
The people's looks were changed by starvation.  
When the fourth year arrived  
Their upstanding bearing bowed,  
Their well-set shoulders slouched,  
People went out in public hunched over.

When the fifth year arrived,  
A daughter would eye her mother coming in;  
A mother would not even open her door to her daughter.

A daughter would watch the scales (at the sale) of her mother,  
A mother would watch the scales (at the sale) of her daughter.  
When the sixth year arrived,

They served up a daughter for a meal,  
Served up a son for food.

Only one or two households were left.  
Their faces were covered with scabs (?) like malt,  
The people stayed alive by . . . life.

They took a message [ ]  
Entered and [ ]  
The order of Atrahasis [ ]  
Saying, 'How long [ ]

(gap of about 36 lines to end of tablet)

OBV

v He (Ellil) was furious [with the Igigi.]

'We, the great Anunna, all of us,  
Agreed together on [a plan].  
Anu and [Adad] were to guard [above],  
I was to guard the earth [below].

Where Enki [went],  
He was to undo the [chain and set (us) free],  
He was to release [produce for the people].  
He was to exercise [control (?) by holding the balance (?)]<sup>34</sup>.

Ellil made his voice heard  
And [spoke] to the vizier Nusku,  
'Have the fifty (?) *lahmu*-heroes (?) . . . fetched for me!

Have them brought in to my presence!  
The fifty (?) *lahmu*-heroes (?) were fetched for him.  
The warrior [Ellil] addressed them,  
'We, the great Anunna, [all of us],  
Agreed together on a plan.

Anu and Adad were to guard above,  
I was to guard the earth below.  
Where you [went],

[You were to undo the chain and set (us) free],  
[You were to release produce for the people],  
[You were to exercise control (?) by holding the balance (?)]<sup>35</sup>.

The warrior Ellil [ ] .

(gap of about 34 lines)

vi 'Adad made his rain pour down,

[ ] filled the pasture land  
And clouds (?) veiled [ ]

Do not feed his people,  
And do not give Nissaba's corn, luxury for  
people, to eat.'

Then [the god (?)] grew anxious as he sat,<sup>35</sup>  
In the gods' assembly worry gnawed at him.

[Enki (?)] grew anxious as he sat,  
In the gods' assembly worry gnawed at him.

(3 lines fragmentary)

[They were furious with each other], Enki and Ellil.

'We, the great Anunna, all of us,

Agreed together on a plan.

Anu and Adad were to guard above,

I was to guard the earth below.

Where you went,

You were to undo the chain and set (us) free!

You were to release produce for the people!

[You were to exercise control (?) by holding the  
balance (?).]

[The warrior Ellil [ ] .

(gap of 30 lines)

vii

'[You] imposed your loads on man,

You bestowed noise on mankind,

You slaughtered a god together with his  
intelligence.

You must . . . and [create a flood].

It is indeed your power that shall be used against

[your people!]

You agreed to [the wrong (?)] plan!

Have it reversed! (?)

Let us make far-sighted Enki swear . . . an oath.'

Enki made his voice heard

And spoke to his brother gods,

'Why should you make me swear an oath?

Why should I use my power against my people?

The flood that you mention to me—

What is it? I don't even know!

Could I give birth to a flood?

That is Ellil's kind of work!

Let him choose [ ]

Let Shullar and [Hanish] march [ahead]

[Let Erakal pull out] the mooring poles

Let [Ninurta] march, let him make [the weirs]  
overflow.

(gap of 2 or 3 lines to end of column)

(gap of 31 lines)

viii

The assembly [ ]

Do not listen to [ ]

The gods gave an explicit command.

Ellil performed a bad deed to the people.'

(Catchline)

Atrahasis made his voice heard

And spoke to his master,

# TABLET III

OBV i

(gap of about 10 lines)

Atrahasis made his voice heard

And spoke to his master,

'Indicate to me the meaning of the dream,

[ ] let me find out its portent (?)'

Enki made his voice heard

And spoke to his servant,

'You say, "I should find out in bed (?)".<sup>36</sup>

Make sure you attend to the message I shall tell

you!

Wall, listen constantly to me!

Reed hut, make sure you attend to all my words!

Dismantle the house, build a boat,

Reject possessions, and save living things.  
The boat that you build

[ ]  
[ ]

Roof it like the Apsu  
So that the Sun cannot see inside it!

Make upper decks and lower decks.  
The tackle must be very strong.

The bitumen strong, to give strength.  
I shall make rain fall on you here,

A wealth of birds, a hamper (?) of fish.  
He opened the sand clock and filled it.

He told him the sand (needed) for the Flood was  
Seven nights' worth.

Arrahasis received the message.

He gathered the elders at his door.

Arrahasis made his voice heard

And spoke to the elders,

'My god is out of favour with your god.

Enki and [Ellil (?)] have become angry with each  
other.

They have driven me out of [my house].

Since I always stand in awe of Enki,

He told (me) of this matter.

I can no longer stay in [ ]

I cannot set my foot on Ellil's territory (again).

[I must go down to the Apsu and stay] with (my)

god (?).

This is what he told me.'

(gap of 4 or 5 lines to end of column)

ii (gap of about 9 lines)

The elders [ ]

The carpenter [brought his axe.]

The reed worker [brought his stone.]

[A child brought] bitumen.

The poor [fetched what was needed.]

(9 lines very damaged)

Everything there was [ ]  
Everything there was [ ]

Pure ones [ ]

Fat ones [ ]

He selected [and put on board.]

[The birds] that fly in the sky,

Cattle [of Shakkān,

Wild animals (?) [ ]

he] put on board

[ ]

He invited his people [ ]

[ ] to a feast.

[ ] he put his family on board.

They were eating, they were drinking.

But he went in and out,

Could not stay still or rest on his haunches.

His heart was breaking and he was vomiting bile.

The face of the weather changed.

Adad belloyed from the clouds.

When (?) he (Arrahasis) heard his noise,

Bitumen was brought and he sealed his door.

While he was closing up his door

Adad kept bellowing from the clouds.

The winds were raging even as he went up

(And) cut through the rope, he released the boat.

iii (6 lines missing at beginning of column)

Anzu was tearing at the sky with his talons,

[ ] the land,

He broke [ ]

[ ] the Flood [came out (?)].

The *kašūšu*-weapon went against the people like an

army.

No one could see anyone else,

They could not be recognized in the catastrophe.

The Flood roared like a bull,

Like a wild ass screaming the winds [howled]

The darkness was total, there was no sun.

[ ] like white sheep.

[ ] of the Flood.

] the noise of the Flood.

[Anu (?) went berserk,  
[The gods (?) ... his sons ... before him  
As for Ninu the Great Mistress,  
Her lips became encrusted with time.<sup>37</sup>  
The great gods, the Anuna,  
Stayed parched and famished.  
The goddess watched and wept,  
Midwife of the gods, wise Mami:  
Let daylight (?) ...

Let it return and ...!  
However could I, in the assembly of gods,  
Have ordered such destruction with them?  
Ellil was strong enough (?) to give a wicked  
order.<sup>38</sup>

Like Tirturu he ought to have cancelled that  
wicked order!<sup>39</sup>

I heard their cry levelled at me,  
Against myself, against my person.  
Beyond my control (?) my offspring have become  
like white sheep.<sup>40</sup>

As for me, how am I to live (?) in a house of  
bereavement?

My noise has turned to silence.  
Could I go away, up to the sky

And live as in a cloister(?)?

What was Anu's intention as decision-maker?  
It was his command that the gods his sons

obeyed,

He who did not deliberate, but sent the Flood,  
He who gathered the people to catastrophe

iv (3 lines missing at beginning of column)

Ninu was wailing ]

'Would a true father (?) have given birth to the  
[rolling (?)] sea

(So that) they could clog the river like  
dragonflies?<sup>41</sup>

They are washed up (?) like a raft overturned,  
They are washed up like a raft overturned in open  
country!

I have seen, and wept over them!

Shall I (ever) finish weeping for them?

She wept, she gave vent to her feelings,

Ninu wept and fuelled her passions.

The gods wept with her for the country.

She was sated with grief, she longed for beer (in  
vain).

Where she sat weeping, (there the great gods) sat  
too,

But, like sheep, could only fill their windpipes (with  
bleating).

Thirsty as they were, their lips

Discharged only the rime of famine.

For seven days and seven nights

The torrent, storm and flood came on.

(gap of about 58 lines)

v

He put down ]  
Provided food ]

The gods smelt the fragrance,

Gathered like flies over the offering.

When they had eaten the offering,

Ninu got up and blamed them all,

'Whatever came over Anu who makes the  
decisions?

Did Ellil (dare to) come for the smoke offering?  
(Those two) who did not deliberate, but sent the  
Flood,

Gathered the people to catastrophe—

You agreed the destruction.

(Now) their bright faces are dark (forever).'

Then she went up to the big flies<sup>42</sup>

Which Anu had made, and (declared) before the  
gods,



## NOTES TO ATRAHASIS

Text: Lambert and Millard 1969, Moran 1987.

When a speech in the translations breaks off because of a gap in the tablet, inverted commas are not closed so as not to imply the precise point at which the speech ends. Indentation shows, when the text resumes after a gap, whether the speech is thought to continue. The original texts have no punctuation, and since it is not always clear when a speech begins or ends even in a perfectly preserved text, the translator occasionally has to make an arbitrary decision. Words and phrases which require detailed philological argument have not been discussed: oversimplification from a scholarly point of view is inevitably the result. These remarks apply to all translations in this book. A summary of references to research on details of the text of *Atrahasis* is given by Moran 1987, to which add Wiggermann 1986 and Wilcke 1999.

OBV Enki is replaced by Ea, the later form of the name, in SBV.

1. The format of the opening line 'When...' may be compared with the *Epic of Creation* and with the *Theogony of Durruti*. The meaning of this line is disputed. The translation in the original edition as 'When the gods like men' was justified by a supposed grammatical comparison with a line in II. ii, which is invalid; but it finds support in a recension of the text 1,000 years later (Lambert 1969a).
2. Play on words 'load' and 'trouble', *šupšit/šapšaqum*.
3. Or, 'The seven great Anunnaki made the Igigi...'
4. Land was divided for inheritance among sons in ancient Mesopotamia by casting lots. Burkert 1983, 53 has pointed out similarities with *Iliad*, XV, 187-193. Poseidon's speech to Iris telling how the earth was originally divided by lot into three domains.
5. The crucial part played by Enki's bolt and his *lahmu*-heroes is discussed in note 26.
6. For *kalakku* meaning 'excavated soil' see AHw *Nachträge*, s.v.
7. This common formulaic phrase says literally 'made/did his mouth', commonly translated 'opened his mouth'. However, it is clear from related phrases in the *Epic of Creation* and *Anzu* (see note 23 to *Anzu*) that the verb implies 'to utter', never 'to open', and 'mouth' has an extended meaning 'speech', attested in various contexts. The Akkadian phrase is alliterative, *pāšu ēpuš*.
8. The same metaphor occurs in the *Descent of Ishtar*.
9. Ennugi: a variant text has Anungal.
10. Perhaps means 'heartbeat, pulse'.
11. Perhaps a play on the words *etennu* 'ghost' and *fēnu* 'intelligence'.
12. Moran 1970 translates: 'Let her inform him while alive of his token, And so that there be no forgetting, the ghost shall remain.' The meaning of the lines is ambiguous.
13. Wording identical to these four lines occurs in *Anzu*, I. iii.
14. Brick-making procedure is described. The brick god, Kulla, was created

by Enki who pinched off clay for the purpose, according to an incantation called 'When Anu created heaven'.

15. The brick may symbolize the prototype of man's creative ability. One of the names of the mother goddess Beler-ili is 'lapis lazuli brick', and it may be relevant that the bun-shaped 'plano-convex' brick used in early dynastic Mesopotamia resembles the bulge of pregnancy and was widely used for building despite its inappropriate shape. See Woolley/Moorey 1982, 45-6. There is no evidence to support the suggestion (Lambert and Millard 1969, 153) that a brick structure used as a birth stool is intended.
16. Verb translated 'made use of (?)' perhaps *bedā*, see AHw *Nachträge*, s.v.
17. Possibly 'crowned' or 'veiled'—the midwife covers her own head in the next episode, but the meaning is uncertain. The word occurs only in the singular.
18. The translation of the following lines largely follows Wilcke 1985a, 295 ff.
19. Possibly there is a small gap in the text here.
20. The word used for 'staff' here also means a term or recurrent period of time.
21. Or, 'She shall name Mami as their...'
22. Six hundred years is a round number in the sexagesimal system used by the ancient Mesopotamians. As a numerical unit, 600 was the simple noun *nēru* in Akkadian. Repetition of a number seems to occur as a literary device, e.g. in *Gilgamesh*, VI. ii, 'you dug seven and seven pits for him', or XI, 'arranged the jars seven and seven'.
23. See AHw *Nachträge*, s.v. *sillānu*.
24. Probably refers to the concept which was prevalent in Mesopotamia of a personal god and goddess for each person.
25. 'Hand (of a god)' is a common Akkadian expression for a disease. For the verb, see AHw *Nachträge*, s.v. *šukku*.
26. The structure of Tablet II is difficult to see. OBV and SBV may diverge, and the point at which they overlap is uncertain. Particularly mystifying is the repeated description of six years of famine in SBV v, and vi. A fragmentary tablet from Babylon (Lambert and Millard 1969, 116 ff.) implies that Ea's *lahmu*-heroes, who were in charge of the bolt that guarded the sea, went out of control and let out fish which broke the bolt and nourished mankind (with E. Wiggermann 1986, 286, reading *lāh-mi-ka/su* instead of *šam-mi-ka/su*, his plants).
27. These lines were used in an incantation against drought according to a neo-Assyrian compilation (Lambert and Millard 1969, 28).
28. See AHw, s.v. *tušim*. 'Ninefold' perhaps echoes the nine months of pregnancy and the nine days in which the brick was put down, in Tablet I, 'Thief' or, 'a benefactor', *šarrāqi* or *šarrāki*.
29. For this passage see Moran 1987, who shows why, in the flood episode, Ea/Enki had to communicate with Atrahasis by means of the reed hut, because he had been sworn to secrecy.
30. These lines refer to salination, the crystallization of salts on the topsoil when drainage of irrigation water is inadequate.



31. See Moran 1985.
32. Note the literary stragem which defies literal chronology by featuring Atirahsis as the same mortal in recurrent crises 600 years apart.
33. Or: 'Will you cut off sickness?'
34. Literally: 'by weighing with (?) the *asqalûlû*', following Atiw Nachtrige, s.v. *asqalûlû*; and see Glossary, s.v.
35. See Veenhof 1975-6.
36. See von Soden 1979, 32.
37. The translation takes the noun as *pullûnu* 'scab' and the verb as *arûnu* 'to rot, discharge putrid liquid'.
38. See Moran 1981.
39. This reference is not understood.
40. See Atiw, s.v. *suppu*. Presumably means 'like sacrificial sheep'.
41. The drowning of masses of dragonflies is alluded to also in Utnapishtim's speech in *Gilgamesh*, X, vi.
42. The symbolism of the flies is not certain. According to Parpola 1983, 316, fly-shaped beads were used in self-flagellation by devotees of Ishar to induce ecstasy, but he quotes no evidence. Kilmer 1987 takes them as symbolic of death and of bravery in battle. A text fragment included in Campbell Thompson 1930, plate 39, says that all the gods of Uruk turned into flies when they abandoned Uruk, so possibly there is an allusion in this passage to a previous event when the gods abandoned mankind. See also *Gilgamesh*, note 139.
43. The word used for 'boat' here, *mukurru*, implies a large cargo vessel shaped like the gibbous moon.
44. At this juncture the gods replaced *lullû*, primeval man who had no natural life-span, with mortal man. Therefore the Flood marks the transition from primeval men who lived for centuries, to men whose lives decline in old age, as now. See Wicke 1999 and George 1999.
45. These are classes of female devotees attached to temples who were not usually allowed to bear children.
46. This type of line is often found at the start of oral narrative: cf. *Gilgamesh*, Anzu, and *Erra and Ishum*.
47. Brief colophons also exist for the first and second tablets of *Atirahsis*. Elsewhere in this volume the translator has selected colophons arbitrarily, particularly if they are well preserved and interesting, in order to illustrate the kinds of information which they can provide.

## The Epic of Gilgamesh

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is the longest and greatest literary composition written in cuneiform Akkadian. It narrates a heroic quest for fame and immortality, pursued by a man who has an enormous capacity for friendship, for endurance and adventure, for joy and sorrow, a man of strength and weakness who loses a unique opportunity through a moment's carelessness. Our interest lies not only in the story and its characters, but also in the unique opportunity the epic provides for tracing earlier, independent folk-tales which were combined in the creation of the whole work, and we can see how the whole work in written form never became fossilized, but was constantly altered through contact with a continuing oral narrative tradition.

It is particularly difficult for the modern student of *Gilgamesh* to come to grips with the subject, for no new edition of the epic has appeared for half a century. In that time many new fragments of the epic have been discovered on a variety of archaeological sites and in museums, and our understanding of the historical background has improved very considerably. But the new information has made it increasingly apparent that we cannot often use one fragment to restore another, because each period and area had its own version of the story, so we cannot simply reconstruct a master version with variants in the way that Hebrew and Classical texts can be edited, and a new fragment may perplex us rather than elucidating an old problem. In fact, the more text fragments come to light, the harder it becomes to produce one coherent edition.

The work is classed as an epic because it features the heroic exploits of a dimly historical figure with, on the sidelines, gods and goddesses who sometimes take a part in the action, and occasionally direct mortal affairs; nevertheless, we gain an overall impression of the free will of man which can fashion its own destiny and occasionally thwart the wishes of heaven. There is no suggestion anywhere that the epic was performed or recited as part of a ceremony or ritual. The specific purpose for which it was composed is a difficult question, but the general