



## *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

### PROLOGUE

He who saw everything in the broad-boned earth, and knew what was to be known  
Who had experienced what there was, and had become familiar with all things  
He, to whom wisdom clung like cloak, and who dwelt together with Existence in Harmony  
He knew the secret of things and laid them bare. And told of those times before the Flood  
In his city, Uruk, he made the walls, which formed a rampart stretching on  
And the temple called Eanna, which was the house of An, the Sky God  
And also of Inanna, Goddess of Love and Battle  
Look at it even now: where cornice runs on outer wall shining brilliant copper -see,  
There is no inner wall; it has no equal. Touch the threshold - ancient. Approach the palace called Eanna.  
There lives Inanna, Goddess of Love and Battle. No king since has accomplished such deeds.  
Climb that wall, go in Uruk, walk there, I say, walk there.  
See the foundation terrace, touch then the masonry - Is not this of burnt brick, And good? I say;  
The seven sages laid its foundation. One third is city; One third is orchards; One third is clay pits-  
Unbuilt-on land of the Inanna Temple search these three parts, find the copper table-box  
Open it. Open its secret fastening. Take out the lapis-lazuli tablet. Read aloud from it.  
Read how Gilgamesh fared many hardships  
Surpassing all kings, great in respect, a lord in his form  
He is the hero, He is of Uruk, He, the butting bull  
He leads the Way, He, the Foremost, He also marches at the rear, a helper to his brothers  
He is the Great Net, protector of his men. He is the furious flood-wave,  
Who destroys even stone walls. The offspring of Lugulbanda, Gilgamesh is perfect in strength  
The son of the revered Cow, of the woman Rimat-Ninsun. Gilgamesh inspires perfect awe. He opened  
the mountain passes, he dug the well on the mountain's flank.  
He crossed to the far shore, traversed the vast sea to the rising Sun. He explored the rim, sought life  
without death. By his strength he reached Ziusudra the Faraway  
He who restored living things to their places  
Those which the Flood had destroyed  
Amidst the teeming peoples,  
Who is there to compare with him in kingship?

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Who like Gilgamesh can say:

'I am king indeed?'

His name was called Gilgamesh

From the very day of his birth,

He was two-thirds god, one third man,

The Great Goddess Aruru designed him, planned his body, prepared his form

A perfect body the gods gave

For the creation of Gilgamesh

Shamash the Sun gave beauty

Adad the Storm gave courage

And so he surpassed all others.

He was two-thirds god, one third man,

The form of his body no one can match

Eleven cubits high he is, nine spans his chest

As he turns to see the lands all around him.

But he comes to the city of Uruk.

Long was his journey, weary, worn down by his labors

He inscribed upon a stone when he returned

This story.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

### **TABLET I**

Out I went, into the world, but there was none better, none whom he, Gilgamesh, could not best.

And so, with his arms, he returned to Uruk. But in their houses, the men of Uruk muttered:

'Gilgamesh, noisy Gilgamesh! Arrogant Gilgamesh!'

All young men gone - Defeated by Gilgamesh, and no son was left to his father.

All young girls made women by Gilgamesh

His lusts are such, and no virgin left to her lover!

Not the daughter of a warrior,

Nor the wife of a nobleman!

Yet he is king and should be

The people's careful shepherd.

He is king and should be

Shepherd of the city.

He is wise, he is handsome, he is firm as a rock.

In heaven the gods heard

Heard the lament of the people,

And the gods cried out to the Great God, higher king of Uruk:

'Strong as a wild bull is this Gilgamesh

So he was made by Aruru, the goddess

None there is who can - not one

None who can survive him in fighting.

No son left to his father.

Gilgamesh, he takes them all, and is he

He the king? Shepherd of the people?

No virgin left to her lover, For he lusts strongly!

No, nor the wife of the nobleman!

The Great God heard this, then

To the Goddess of Creation, Aruru -

Cried all the gods:

'You created this Gilgamesh! Well, create him his equal!

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Let him look as into mirrors - Give a second self to him, yes;

Rushing winds meet rushing winds!

Let them flow heart to heart against -

Give them each other to fight,

Leaving Uruk in peace!'

So the Goddess of Creation took and formed in her mind

This image, and there it was conceived -

in her mind, and it was made of material

That composes the Great God,

He of the Firmament.

She then plunged her hands down into water and pinched off a little clay. She let it drop in the wilderness

Thus the noble Enkidu was made. For this was he the very strength of Ninurta, the God of War, was his form, rough bodied, long hair,

His hair waved like corn filaments -

Yes, like the hair of that goddess

Who is the corn, she, Nisaba. Matted hair was all over his body, like the skins of the cattle.

Yes, like the body of that god.

Who is the cattle, he, Samugan.

This Enkidu was innocent of mankind.

He knew not the cultivated land.

Enkidu was in the hills

With the gazelles -

They jostled each other

With all the herds

He too loved the water-hole.

But one day by a water hole

A trapper met him

Yes, face to face,

Because the herds of wild game

Had strayed into his territory.

On three days face to face -

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Each day the trapper was terrified,  
Frozen stiff with fear.  
With his game he went home,  
Unable to speak, numb with fright.  
The trapper's face altered, new -  
A long journey does that to one,  
Gives a new visage upon returning -  
The trapper, his heart all awe, told his father:  
'Father, what a man! No other like him! He comes from the hills, strongest alive!  
A star in heaven his strength,  
Of the star essence of An, the Sky Father  
Over the hills with the beasts  
Eating grass  
Ranges across all your land,  
Goes to the wells.  
I fear him, stay far away.  
He fills in my pits  
Tears up my game traps  
Helps the beasts escape;  
Now all the game slips away -  
Through my fingers.'  
His father opened his mouth,  
Told the son, the trapper:  
'My son, in Uruk lives Gilgamesh.  
None can withstand him,  
None has surpassed him,  
As a star in heaven his strength  
Of the star-essence of An, the Sky Father.  
Go to Uruk, find Gilgamesh  
Praise the wild man's strength ask for a temple hierodule from the Temple of Love,  
Such a child of pleasure;  
Bring her and let her power of woman

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Subdue this wild man.

When he goes to the wells,

He will embrace the priestess

And the wild beasts will reject him.'

To Uruk the trapper went

And said to Gilgamesh:

'Like no other, wild,

Roaming in the pastures,

A star in heaven his strength

Of the star-essence of An, the Sky Father.

I am afraid, stay far away; he helps the beasts escape

Fills in my pits

Tears up my game traps.'

Gilgamesh said:

'Trapper, return,

Take a priestess; when he goes to the wells

He will embrace the priestess

And the wild beasts will reject him.'

Then returned with the hierodule

And three days to the drinking hole,

There sat down

Hierodule facing the trapper,

Waiting for the game.

First day, nothing.

Second day, nothing.

Third day, yes.

The herds came to drink, and Enkidu -

Glad for the water were the small wild beasts,

And Enkidu was glad for the water -

He of the gazelles and wild grass,

Born in the hills.

The priestess saw this man

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Wild from the hills.

'There, woman,' said the trapper, 'This is he,  
Have no shame, delay not, Welcome his love,  
Teach him the savage, your art of woman,  
For as he learns to love you, then  
The wild beasts, his companions,  
They will reject him.'

She did as she was bade,  
And after six days and seven nights,  
Enkidu had forgotten his home  
Had forgotten the hills  
After that time he was satisfied.

Then he went back to the wild beasts -

But the gazelles saw him and ran,  
The wild beasts saw him and ran.

Enkidu would follow, but  
Wisdom was in him,

Thoughts in his hear - a man's.

So he returned to the priestess.

At her feet he listened intently

'You have wisdom, Enkidu.

Now you are as a god.

Why the beasts? Why the hills?

Come to Uruk of the strong walls

To Inanna's Temple of Love,

And to the Eanna,

Where the Sky God An can be found.

Gilgamesh is there, strong,

Raging like a wild bull, over all

Is his strength.'

Favorably as he speaks, he hears her words.

He comes to know his own heart



## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

And his desire to find a friend.

He tells her, the priestess:

'Take me, girl, to the sacred pure

Dwelling of Love and Sky God's house

Where lives Gilgamesh of perfect strength,

He who rages like a bull over all,

And I will summon him forth and challenge him

And I will shout in Uruk:

"I am the mightiest!

Yes, I can change the order of what is!

Anyone born on the steppe is mighty and has strength"

'Then let us go that he may see your face

And I will show you Gilgamesh, for I know well where he is.

Come Enkidu, to Uruk of ramparts,

Where all are dressed for festival,

Where each day is a festival.

To you, Enkidu, of joy in life

I will show Gilgamesh of joy in life

See him, see his face

Radiant is his masculinity, of full-bodied vigor

His body exceptionally fit,

So exceeding you in strength,

Needing no sleep by day or by night.

Restrain your folly, Enkidu.

Gilgamesh - Shamash the Sun is proud,

Also An, the God of Firmament,

Also valiant Enlil, his son,

And Enki, his son also -

All have given wisdom.

Before you come from the open plains

Gilgamesh will have dreamed of it.'

And so Gilgamesh rose from his bed

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

And to his mother, in revealing dreams, said:

'Mother, I saw in a dream last night

That there were stars in heaven

And a star descended upon me like unto

The essence of An, the Sky God.

I tried to lift it up, but it was too heavy for me,

I tried to move it, but it would not be moved.

The land of Uruk was around it,

The land was placed round about it.

All the people were pressing towards it.

All the nobles also came round it,

And all my friends kissed its feet.

I was drawn towards it as to a woman

And I laid it at your feet

And you said it was my equal.'

She, the Wise, the Custodian of Knowledge,

Says to her lord -

She, Ninsun, Custodian of Knowledge,

Says to Gilgamesh:

'Your equal was a star of heaven

Which descended upon you like unto

The essence of An who his the God of the Firmament

You tried to lift it but it would not be moved

And I called it your equal, comparing it to you.

You were drawn to it as to a woman.

The meaning of this

Is of a strong friend who saves his companion

He is the strongest of the land; he has strength.

As a star in heaven his strength,

The strength of An of the Firmament and his host.

So that you are drawn to him overwhelmingly.

And this means he will never forsake you.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Such is your dream.'

Gilgamesh says again to his mother:

'Mother, another dream

In Uruk of the ramparts lay an axe -

All were gathered around it,

Uruk-land was standing round about it.

The people pressed towards it;

I laid it at your feet.

I was drawn to it as to a woman.

For you called it my equal.'

She, the Wise Custodian of Knowledge, says to her son -

'The axe is a man

You were drawn to it as to a woman

For I called it your equal

And it was to rival you.

This means a strong friend standing by his friend

He is the strongest of the land; he has strength.

The essence of An of the Firmament, is his,

So strong is he.'

Gilgamesh then spoke to his mother

'Now according to the word of God Enli

Let a counselor and friend come to me

That I may acquire a companion

And to him I shall be friend and counselor also.'

And as Gilgamesh revealed his dream,

The girl was speaking to Enkidu

As they sat together.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

### **TABLET II**

After six days and seven nights

The girl said to him, she said to Enkidu:

'When I look at you, Enkidu, you seem to be like a god.

Why the wild beasts?

Why the roaming over the steppe?

Come with me, Come to ramparted Uruk.

There the holy temple of Eanna where the Great God An lives,

Come with me, Enkidu, to the holy dwelling

To the temple, Sky God's house,

For Gilgamesh of many deeds lives there.

You are so like him.

You will love him as yourself, rise up from the earth, come to a shepherd's bed!'

There came upon his heart the truth of what she said.

He heard her words and they were good.

She divided her clothing in two,

One garment for him, one for her

Holding his hand she led him

Led him like a child.

And they came to the hut of the shepherds

Which is in the sheepfold.

All the shepherds gathered round him,

Pressed round him, were drawn to him

Thronged round the wild man.

Of her instruction the priestess is proud;

This is a man who is like Gilgamesh in form,

Taller he is in form,

He was born in the mountains,

And like the star-essence of the Sky Father An, his strength is more powerful.

And Enkidu sat at their table

That he might eat of their produce.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

But he knew the milk of wild creatures,  
By which he was suckled in the wilds.  
The shepherds placed their own food before him, and  
He choked, he looked,  
He stared at it, at them.  
Enkidu knows nothing of this,  
He knows not eating food,  
What is this drink? This strong drink? He has not been taught it.  
Bread was set before him - he knows it not.  
Beer was set before him - he knows it not.  
Enkidu did not eat bread,  
He squeezed his eyes together.  
The girl then spoke;  
She said to Enkidu:  
'Enkidu, eat that food. Drink this strong drink.  
It is what is done here.'  
So Enkidu ate the food,  
Ate until he was full.  
He drank that strong drink  
Seven cups of it (1).  
He felt so free, he felt so happy,  
He rejoiced so in his heart!  
His face became radiant.  
He rubbed all the shaggy growth,  
The hair of his body.  
He anointed himself with oil  
And thus he became a man.  
He donned clothing -  
Look! He is like a man!  
He takes up his weapon,  
He attacks the lions  
So the shepherds might have peace at night.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

He caught wolves, He captured lions,  
And the chief cattlemen could rest.  
Enkidu was their watchman,  
A man of strength,  
An unparalleled hero!  
To the shepherds he said:  
'I am a man now.  
I can eat bread at the table,  
I can drink strong drink.  
But I have the strength of he who roams the steppe.  
I am stronger than you.  
No one is stronger.  
You see I catch wolves,  
You see I capture lions.  
Because of me the shepherds can rest at night,  
Because of me the chief cattlemen can lie down.  
I am become the king of the sheepfold.'  
And Enkidu sat at the table,  
He ate the food, he drank the strong drink  
He felt good in his heart.  
He made merry, then he looked up and saw a man.  
He told the girl:  
'Girl, bring the man. Why is he here? I must know his name!'  
The girl called the man, went to him, said to him,  
'Sir, where are you going? Why have you taken this, your difficult course?'  
The man spoke, spoke to Enkidu,  
'Into the people's special place, their very own meeting-house,  
Even into it has he intruded! Set aside rules and laws for wedlock!  
On the city he heaped shame! Strange practices he has imposed upon a city helpless to resist.  
The gods have ordained this in their wisdom, by their will.  
It was so decreed from the moment of birth when his umbilical cord was cut out.'  
At the man's words the face of Enkidu paled.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Fury grew within his heart; his eyes became frightful to look upon

Enkidu spoke his anger, said to the man:

'This cannot continue to be! I will go to ramparted Uruk.

I will meet Gilgamesh I will bring his excesses to an end!'

Enkidu set out for Uruk; Enkidu walked in front, the girl walked behind.

When he entered ramparted Uruk, the people thronged round him.

When he stopped in the street, in Uruk of the ramparts, saying of him:

'He is like Gilgamesh in form! He is smaller in size, but stronger in bone.

He is a match for Gilgamesh! He is the strongest of the steppe, strength is his,

There will be endless clash of arms in Uruk!'

The nobles rejoiced, 'Here is a hero for all who are honorable!

To match divine Gilgamesh, here is his equal!'

Now Gilgamesh is coming along, but Enkidu appears in the street and bars his way.

To Gilgamesh is opposed the might of Enkidu.

The divine Gilgamesh is face to face with his equal, Enkidu of the steppes.

The king of ramparted Uruk sees his equal, who has strength,

Smaller in size, but stronger of bone, like unto Gilgamesh to the hair.

Gilgamesh sees his shaggy growth - On the steppe the grass sprouts in as much abundance.

Gilgamesh drew himself up and stood before him in the market-place of Uruk.

It was there they met, and Enkidu blocked the gate with his foot and would not let Gilgamesh enter.

They grappled their belts and wrestled like champions, rushing wind meets rushing wind,

Heart to heart against - holding fast like bulls.

They shattered absolutely the doorpost of the holy gate, and the wall shook with this fateful act.

They fought in the street, they battled in the market.

But in the end, brought Enkidu to the earth, his own foot still on the ground, and won the contest.

Gilgamesh's anger vanished, he turned away, but when he turned away Enkidu said to him,

Spoke to Gilgamesh, 'As one single and unique your mother bore you,

You are raised above all men, you are king of the people by decree

Of Enlil, son of the Great God An!'

### **NOTES ON TABLET II**

1. Seven cups or seven jugs are symbolic, representing the sacred number of the seven initiatory planets.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

### **TABLET III**

[Enkidu continues to speak to Gilgamesh]

'Your strength surpasses my own,

For why do you lord like a wild bull

Over the people of ramparted Uruk?

Are you not the king, Shepherd of the people?

Gilgamesh answered, spoke to Enkidu:

'No one before opposed my strength, now I have found a worthy companion.

Together we could go to the Cedar Forest.'

Enkidu puzzled said to Gilgamesh:

'Why do you wish to do such a thing? It is a very long journey

To do what you say, to go down to the Cedar Forest.

I will take a message for you.'

They kissed one another as brothers and formed a friendship.

Gilgamesh spoke to Enkidu, said to him,

'Oh my friend, I have always wanted

To climb Cedar mountain (1).

There dwells fierce Humbaba who is evil and fearsome to look upon.

I wish to slay him and banish what is evil from the land.

But he lives in the Cedar Forest and I know not the way.'

[Here a large portion is lost]

The mother of Gilgamesh, who knows all,

Raises her hands to Shamash the Sun

[Here ten more lines are lost]

Enkidu's eyes brim tears, sick to the heart

Bitter sighs,

Yes, his eyes brim tears

Sick to heart and bitter sighs.

Gilgamesh, understanding, says to Enkidu:

'My friend, why eyes brimming tears? Sick to heart? Such bitter sighs?'

Enkidu said to Gilgamesh, told him:



## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

'My friend, a cry chokes me, constricts my neck veins,  
My arms are limp, my strength gone into weakness'.

Gilgamesh spoke to Enkidu, said to him:

[Here four or five lines are lost.]

'In the forest terrible Humbaba lives. Let us, you and I, slay him, and banish all that is evil from the land!'

[Here four lines are lost.]

Enkidu spoke, said to Gilgamesh:

'My friend, I found it out when I was ranging forth over the steppe,  
Running with the wild beasts, for ten thousand double-hours the forest stretches,  
Extending in every direction.

Who could there possibly be to go down into this place?

And Humbaba - his roaring is the Great Flood, his mouth is fire, his breath is death!

Why do you wish to do such a thing? We are no match to fight fierce Humbaba!'

Gilgamesh spoke, saying to Enkidu,

'I will climb the Cedar Mountain!'

[Here seven lines are lost.]

Enkidu spoke to Gilgamesh, said to him,

'But how can we go to the Cedar Forest? Dread Wer is its guardian, who sleeps not at all and is strong.

Humbaba-Wer is his.....[a partial line is lost here]

Adad the storm is his voice, he has the breath of death.

He was appointed guardian of the Cedar Forest by Enlil, son of An, the Great God, to terrify all mortals.

Humbaba - his roaring is the Great Flood.

His mouth is fire, his breath is death!

At sixty double-hours he hears every wild cow in the forest.

Who can go down into his forest?

Enlil appointed him to be guard, to watch the cedars, terrify mortals,

Weakness grips one who goes down into the Cedar Forest.'

Gilgamesh spoke to Enkidu, said to him,

'Who can climb into heaven, my friend? Immortal under the Sun are the gods alone,

As for mortals their days must end - what they achieve is but the wind!

Even now you fear death. Where is your hero's strength?

I will lead you, then. You may call to me: 'Advance, fear not!'

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

If I fall, I shall have made my name:

"Gilgamesh", they will say, "against fierce Humbaba has fallen!" and long after,

My descendants born in my house shall honor my name as one who struggled against fierce Humbaba

And fell in fighting on Cedar Mountain.

Speaking as you have, you have grieved me.

I will ready my hand,

I will fell the cedar trees,

I will make my name a name that endures!

I will commission the smith

To cast weapons for us.'

And they commissioned the smith;

The artisans sat down to discuss it.

They cast mighty axes, they cast axes of three talents each -

And a talent contains sixty minas!

They cast mighty swords - the blades were two talents each,

The knobs on their sheaths thirty minas each, the handles of the swords

Thirty minas of gold each; Gilgamesh and Enkidu were both laden with ten talents apiece.

At the great gate of Uruk with its seven bolts gathered all of the people.

There in the street and market of ramparted Uruk

Stood mighty Gilgamesh, King of Uruk of the ramparts, the people all sat down before him.

Gilgamesh spoke to them, saying,

'O thou people of ramparted Uruk, I am going on a journey to the Forest of Cedars,

Him of whom they speak, at whose name all lands tremble,

I, Gilgamesh, will see.

I will conquer him in the Cedar Forest!

I will spread abroad among all lands

How strong are the progeny of Uruk!

I will raise my hand and cut down the cedars!

I will make my name a name that endures!'

The elders of ramparted Uruk replied to Gilgamesh, said to him:

'You are very young, Gilgamesh,

Your heart has swept away your reason.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

You have no knowledge of what is involved

We are told that Humbaba is strange to see and terrifying.

Who can possibly withstand his weapons?

For ten thousand double-hours in every direction

Extends his great forest.

Who would go down into such a place?

Humbaba - his roaring is the Great Flood.

His mouth is fire, his breath is death!

Why do you wish to do such a thing?'

No one is a match to struggle with Humbaba.'

When Gilgamesh heard these words of his advisers,

He looked round, smiling to his friend:

'Now, my friend, thus do they tremble and fear even to speak of fierce Humbaba.

O Enkidu, together we can face him in his great forest of cedars, and gain renown.

O elders of Uruk, I go with my friend Enkidu, he of the steppe who has strength.

Together we will face fierce Humbaba.'

The elders answered Gilgamesh and said:

'May they own god protect thee

May he lead thee back safely along the road

May he bring thee back to the quay of Uruk.'

Gilgamesh then fell down before Shamash the Sun and spoke these words:

'I go, o Shamash, my hands raised in prayer;

Bless the future well-being of my soul.

Bring me back safely to the quay of Uruk, and cause thy protection to be established over me.'

Gilgamesh called his friend and inspected his omen.

[Here seven lines are lost. The omen, which would have been read from the liver, gall bladder and intestines of a sacrificial lamb must have been unfavorable:]

Tears ran down the face of Gilgamesh.

'I must travel a road I have never travelled, I must follow a way I know not.

But I know I should fare well, and I depart with a joyful heart.

May the blessings of the Great gods be upon me! They who are on their celestial thrones.'

And then were brought to him his weapons, those mighty swords, quiver and bow,

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

All placed in his hands, He took the axes, and, with his quiver, the bow of Anshan  
Into his girdle he put his sword that they might depart.

The people pressed around Gilgamesh cheering,

'By the will of God may you return to the city!'

The elders paid homage and counseled Gilgamesh concerning his journey:

'Trust not your strength alone! Be wary and alert, on guard. Let Enkidu walk before you.

He has seen the way, has travelled the road.

He who leads the way saves his companion,

He who knows the path protects his friend.

Enkidu has seen combat, knows it, knows the way to the Cedar Forest.

Over the obstacles and ditches will he carry you.

Let him penetrate and slip through all the passes of the forest of Humbaba.

May Shamash grant your wish,

May he show you of what you speak.

May he open the unopened path for you,

Unbar the road for your coming; unclose for you the foot of the mountain!

May your nights bring you delights,

And may Lugulbanda stand by you,

May he stand by your wish!

May you attain your wish as does a child!

After slaying Humbaba, which you are attempting, wash then your feet.

When time to rest at night, dig a well -

May the water of your water-skin be ever pure! - and offer cool water to Shamash.

And be ever mindful of Lugulbanda!

Enkidu, we the Assembly entrust our king to you. Do you deliver him back to us!'

Gilgamesh spoke to Enkidu, said to him,

'Up, my friend, let us go to the Great Palace to see Ninsun, the Great Queen,

Ninsun the Wise, who has knowledge of everything will make wise our feet in their course.'

Gilgamesh and Enkidu went to the Great Palace, to see Ninsun, the Great Queen.

Gilgamesh stepped forward on entering the palace:

'O Ninsun, I make bold to depart on a great journey to the place of Humbaba,

I must face battle strange to me, travel a road unknown to me.

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Until I can return, until I come to the Cedar Forest,  
And banish all that is evil from the land, all that is hateful to Shamash,  
Do pray to Shamash on my behalf.'

[Here several lines are lost]

Ninsun entered her chamber

[Here one line is lost]

She donned a garment suitable to her body  
Also an ornament appropriate for her neck,  
Placed her tiara on her head, went out into the grounds,  
Climbed the stairs, ascended the parapet, attained the roof and there did offer up  
To Shamash the Sun much incense.

With this smoke-offering in progress she raised her hands to Shamash:

'Having granted me as my son Gilgamesh, why have then have you given my him such a restless heart?

Why have you made him wish to go on a Great Journey to the place of Humbaba?

To face a battle strange to him?

To travel a road unknown to him?

Until the day he can return, until he reaches the Cedar Forest ,  
Slays the fierce Humbaba and banishes from the land all that is evil which you hate,  
In the day hours when you shine forth, may Aya your bride fear you not and keep you mindful  
And may she also commend him to those who watch over the hours of the night!

[Here many lines are lost]

She put out incense, chanting a spell.

Then she summoned Enkidu to impart him this message:

'Mighty Enkidu, you who came not from my womb, I have now adopted you,

As have the devotees of Gilgamesh.

And around the neck of Enkidu she placed....

[The remainder of this line and several others are completely lost. In all probability Ninsun placed a protective amulet around Enkidu's neck. When the text resumes again, Gilgamesh and Enkidu are with the elders and about to depart.]

'Let Enkidu protect the friend, safeguard the companion, let him carry him through the pitfalls!

We, the Assembly, entrust to you our king.

Do you deliver him back to us!'

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Enkidu then spoke to Gilgamesh, said to him,

'Since you are determined upon the struggle, then come away.

Let your heart not be troubled and follow me.

My friend, turn not away from the journey.

A way not known to you; You need hold no fears when I shall lead you.

In the Cedar Forest I know the dwelling place and also the road which Humbaba travels.'

[Here seven lines are lost]

When the elders had heard this speech of his

They sent the hero on his way, saying

'Go, Gilgamesh - may Shamash grant your wish, and may your God be at your side.'

### **NOTES ON TABLET III**

1. Cedar mountain and Cedar Forest are a mixture of the mythical and real. Their geographical location is a subject of hot dispute among scholars; one strong possibility is Lebanon, though not everyone agrees on this.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

### **TABLET IV**

[Most of this tablet is mutilated and lost.]

After twenty leagues they broke off a morsel.

After thirty more, they rested for the night.

Fifty were the leagues which they trod in a day.

[The rest of the column is missing. After a missing portion of the next column, the text recommences.]

After twenty intervals they broke off a morsel.

After thirty more they rested for the night.

Fifty were the intervals which they trod in a day.

[Here then lines are missing]

Gilgamesh went up the mountain, poured out the fine-meal and intoned,

'O Mountain, bring me a dream that is favorable.'

[The rest of the column is missing, as well as the following two columns in their entirety and the beginning of the fifty column. By the time the text resumes in the incomplete fifth column, Gilgamesh and Enkidu have arrived at the doorway or gate of the Cedar Forest. Enkidu is encouraging a hesitant and wavering Gilgamesh.]

'Remember your words when in Uruk? Come, rise, that you may slay him!

Are you not Gilgamesh, the progeny of Great Uruk?'

Gilgamesh heard these words from his mouth and great became his confidence.

'Quickly, step up to him, let him not go -

Not go down into the woods and vanish there,

Where he cloaks himself with seven cloaks (2)

One is on him now, six are still off...'

Like unto a lordly bull he rages and is full of...

He the Guardian of the Forest calls out....

Humbaba, like

[The rest of the column is missing, as is the beginning of the next. The text commences again as follows:]

Enkidu spoke to Gilgamesh,

Said to him, 'Let us not go down into the heart of the forest!

'... my friend, as weaklings....

....we have travelled, all of them....

....before us.....

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

My friend - canny in combat, you are skilled in battle;

Only touch my garment and you will not fear death.

... and remain with me...'

[Here one line is undecipherable]

'So that the limpness may leave your arm, that the weakness leaves your hand...

Stay by me as my friend and let us go.

Together into the depths of the forest let not combat destroy your courage.

Forget death and do not...

A man determined to action but thoughtful...

He who leads the way preserves himself and keeps his companion safe.

Though they may perish yet their name will endure.'

And so they both arrived at the green mountain.

They fell silent and stood quite still.



## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

### **TABLET V**

They stood quite still and looked at the forest,

Saw how high the great cedars were, and gazed upon the entrance to the forest.

There, where Humbaba was wont to tread was a fine path; straight it was and easy to travel.

They saw also the Cedar Mountain, where lived the gods,

And Irnini, Goddess of Love, holy Inanna had her throne seat.

The cedar raised aloft its great luxuriant growth: what cool shade, what delight!

Covering the brushwood, covering the....

[Here the text breaks off. It resumes, after an indeterminate lapse, with Gilgamesh speaking to Enkidu:]

'Rise up, cast your gaze to the mountain....!

My divine sleep has been torn from me.

My friend, I saw a dream - Oh, how ill-omed!

How....! How disturbing!

I seized a wild bull of the steppe; He bellowed, he kicked up the earth,

And the sky was darkened.

I gave way before him. He was seizing.... strength, my flank

He tore out the .....

He provided food.....he drank

He gave me water to drink from his water-skin.'

[The text continues unbroken without identifying the speakers, but Enkidu is obviously replying to Gilgamesh:]

'My friend, the god to whom we go is not a wild bull,

Although his form is surpassing strange.

What you saw as a wild bull is really the radiant Shamash the Sun.

He will take us by the hand in our dire need,

He who gave you the water to drink from his water-skin -

He is your special god who brings you honor, Shamash the Sun.

We should therefore join him together with Lugulbanda, your father, your own god, your familiar,

So that we might do a deed, such deed, which, though we die, yet will not be inglorious.'

[There may be a break here, as the order of the fragments is uncertain. But the text continues coherently:]

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

They took hold one of the other and went to their nightly rest.

Sleep descended upon them - as it were the great surge of night.

But upon midnight hour a-sudden, sleep flew from Gilgamesh.

To Enkidu, his friend, he tells his dream:

'If you have not waked me, then how do I wake?

Enkidu, my friend, I must have seen a dream!

Have you not waked me? Why .....?

Aside from that first dream, I now have seen a second dream;

In my dream a great mountain fell, pinned me to the ground, trapped my feet beneath it.

A great glare of light overwhelmed me.

A man like any other - such a man as we have never seen -

Stepped forth from the light.

His grace and beauty were more,

More than any on this earth.

He freed me from the mountain, gave me water to drink, quieted my heart.

He put my feet back on the earth.'

Enkidu spoke to Gilgamesh, said to him,

'My friend, let us go down into the plain,

Let us go take counsel together.'

[Several lines are lost here, and we don't have Enkidu's interpretation of the dream. Perhaps the wondrous man is again Shamash, who was seen as a bull, probably because the Epic was written in the Age of Taurus, between 4,000 and 2,000 BC, when the sun rose at the spring equinox in the sign of the Bull. Shamash is also the root deity of Gilgamesh. After a break, the text resumes as follows, with Gilgamesh again speaking:]

'A second dream I saw:

We were standing in mountain gorges and a mountain fell upon us.

It was so large that by comparison we were like small reed flies -

Like the little fly of the cane-brakes we were.'

He who was born on the steppe...

Enkidu said to his friend,

'My friend, the dream is auspicious, it is a precious dream....

My friend, that mountain which you saw, that mountain is Humbaba.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

We shall seize Humbaba; we shall kill him, and cast his dead body on the plain.

On the morrow...'

After 20 leagues, they broke off a morsel

After 30 more, rested for the night.

Before Shamash the Sun they dug a well....

Gilgamesh went up a mountain and made offering of his fine-meal and intoned:

'O Mountain, bring a dream for Enkidu, bring for him a dream of mine to interpret!'

And the mountain did bring a dream for Enkidu.

It brought for him....

Cold rain passed overhead....

He had to take shelter....

.... and like unto the wild barley of the mountains.....

Gilgamesh puts his chin to his knees, sleep which falls upon mankind fell upon Gilgamesh.

He started, full awake, said to his friend:

'My friend, have you called me? Why am I awake?

Did you touch me? Why have I started so?

Did not some god pass by? Why have I gone numb?

Why are my limbs paralyzed? My friend, I saw a 3rd dream,

And this dream was terrible in every way.

The heavens were roaring and screaming, the earth was blasted with booming sounds,

And darkness descended like a shroud - a sudden streak of fire as lightning flashed,

The clouds grew bloated and full and they rained down death!

Then the fire-glow of the skies died out, and all those fallen from the fire, that downpour of death,

Crusted over to ashes. Oh, let us go down into the plain! There we can take counsel!'

When Enkidu heard this, heard the dream his friend offered him,

He said to Gilgamesh interpreting his dream,

Made him come to acceptance of his dream:

[Most unfortunately we do not have any account of Enkidu's interpretation of the dream as the text breaks here. When the text resumes, Gilgamesh and Enkidu are no longer conversing about the dream but have arrived at the forest of Humbaba:]

Gilgamesh gripped the axe, and with it felled the cedar.

Humbaba, hearing the sound of this, fell into a fury and raged:

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

'Who is it who has come -

Come and interfered with my trees?

My trees which have grown on my own mountains?

And has also felled the cedar?'

But just then from heaven came the voice of the Great God Shamash the Sun:

'Have no fear. Approach him and.....

March, as long as.....

He enters not into his house.....'

[Here the text breaks off. Gilgamesh and Enkidu are apparently given instructions by the voice of Shamash on how to approach Humbaba in order to kill him. This would seem to include specific directions and useful information about Humbaba's movements. But the heroes do not seem to fare very well even with such helpful hints:]

His tears streamed down from him and Gilgamesh said to Shamash in heaven:

[Here two lines are mutilated in the tablet and cannot be read:]

'But I have taken the way of heavenly Shamash, I have trod the way he said.'

Humbaba said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'The fool, the stupid man - They should take advice, Gilgamesh!

Why do you now approach me? With that Enkidu, that son of a

Who knew not his father, Companion of the small turtles, of the large turtles;

In your youth I beheld you, now should I kill you to satisfy my belly?

Shamash brought you, Gilgamesh, and allowed you to reach me.

It is through his assistance that you are stepping along thus.

But, Gilgamesh, I will bite through the palate-pin of your throat and your neck.

I will allow the shrieking serpent-bird, the eagle and the raven to eat your flesh!'

Gilgamesh said to his friend, said to Enkidu:

'My friend, Humbaba's facial features have altered,

And their configuration raises itself to an equal height

But my entrails are gripped by fear that we are too hasty.'

Enkidu said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'My friend, why do you wail so miserably and let your mouth go flabby and conceal yourself?

For now, my friend, the axe has been cast for you -

The copper-smith poured its molten metal from the gutter channel,

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Annealed it by heating for a double-hour,  
Allowed it then to cook for a double-hour,  
Producing this weapon of the flood-storm.

Seize the whip - travel not on your feet, do no turn back!

Strike with the axe and make your blow strong!

Shamash in heaven heard the prayer of Gilgamesh

And against Humbaba rose up mighty winds:

The Great Wind, the North Wind, the South Wind, the Whirlwind,

The Storm Wind, the Chill Wind the Tempestuous Wind

The Hot Wind - eight were the winds.

They rose up against Humbaba.

Lo! He cannot move forwards!

Lo! He cannot move backwards!

And so Humbaba relented.

Then Humbaba answered Gilgamesh:

'Oh, do let me go, Gilgamesh! You will be my master, I will be your servant.

And as for my trees, My trees which I have grown,

I will.....

Strong.....

I will cut them down and build you houses.'

But Enkidu said to Gilgamesh:

'Do not listen to him. Hark not to the word of Humbaba. Humbaba must not live!'

[Humbaba then appears to be battered by the various winds:]

But the great winds roared against Humbaba

.... the .... dust-storms flowed

Perpetually on his head.

[Enkidu then seems to plead with Gilgamesh to kill Humbaba, for the atrocities he has committed:]

'I beg you to listen to me, my friend!'

..... he struck down once more speedily and

..... to the little child.

'But you know the sign of my forest, the sign.....

And you know precisely everything that is said.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

I should have lifted you up on high,

I should have killed you upon your entrance into the branches of my forest!

I should have let the shrieking serpent-bird, the eagle and the raven eat your flesh!

[Humbaba pleads with Enkidu to spare his life]

But now, o Enkidu, it lies with you. Make limp your wrath.

Speak to Gilgamesh! He might spare my life!

Enkidu said to his friend, said to Gilgamesh:

'My friend, Humbaba the guardian of the Cedar Forest.....Strike him to maim him.

Kill him! Crush him! And quickly, Humbaba, the guardian of the forest - Strike him to maim him.

Kill him! Crush him! And quickly.

Before God Enlil, the Foremost hears his cries.

The gods will be filled with wrath against us for our deed.

Enlil in the city of Nippur, Shamash in.....

Put down and.....'

As Gilgamesh came nearer to Humbaba, but Humbaba heard his approach.

[Here many lines are lost. When the text resumes, Gilgamesh and Enkidu seem to be quarreling;]

'Should not.....

Should not erect a higher altar than his friend?

Gilgamesh and Enkidu should never more have one another as friends!'

Enkidu said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'My friend, I speak to you but do you not put a stop to my words. First kill Humbaba, then kill his servants!'

[fragments are missing and pieced together here]

When he had spoken thus,

Gilgamesh heeded the words of his friend.

With his hand he took the axe,

Drew the sword from his belt.

Gilgamesh struck the neck of Humbaba,

Enkidu, his friend, struck Humbaba twice also.

At the third blow Humbaba fell.

Confusion..... dumbfounded,

He struck the watchman, Humbaba, to the ground.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

For two leagues the cedars resounded.

They placed upon him....

They brought him before God Enlil and Goddess Ninlil

Enlil brought forth from the sea his palace servant

And Ninlil brought forth from.... her....

When Enlil and Ninlil.....

'Why thus.....?'

Let him come forth, let him seize.....'

In front of Enlil they entered,

In front of Enlil, having kissed the earth,

They threw down the shroud,

They took out the head

And they rested it in front of Enlil.

Enlil, at the sight of Humbaba,

Grew angry at the words of Gilgamesh and said:

'Why do you act in this way?

May your faces be seared by fire!

May the food you eat be eaten by fire!

May the water you drink be drunk by fire!'

[There is a gap here, during which Enlil presents Gilgamesh with the seven melammu or roars of Humbaba:]

At the end of their conversation,

After his servant had prepared a sweet....

Enlil said, 'Place him down before you,

Make him eat the bread that you eat,

Make him drink the drink that you drink.

After Enlil had taken away Humbaba,

He retained his exalted terrifying roar;

He attached the first roar to a large river;

He attached the second roar to.....

He attached the third roar to ..... which carried....

He attached the fourth roar to a lion

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

He attached the fifth roar to barbarity,  
He attached the sixth roar to a mountain  
He attached the seventh roar to the goddess Nungal.  
To the king, who subdued and conquered the terrifying roar,  
To Gilgamesh the wild bull.  
Who plunders the mountain.  
Who goes from there to the sea -  
Glory to him!  
And from valiant Enkidu -glory to Enki!  
God Enki, that your glory be sweet!



## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

### **TABLET VI**

The dirt of his travels, Gilgamesh washed from his hair,

A beauteous sheen he put to his weapons,

Polishing them.

Down along his back it fell,

The shining clean hair of his head.

All the soiled garments, he cast them off.

Clean, new clothes he put on.

About him now, wrapped, clinging to him, a cloak with its fringe,

His sparkling sash was fastened onto him, his crown on his head.

But when Inanna had seen this,

When she, the Goddess of Love and War, had seen this

She raised an eye indeed to the beauty of Gilgamesh:

'O Gilgamesh, will you not be my mate?

I will give you myself as wife: you shall be my husband!

For you I will give a chariot made of lapis-lazuli

Yes, too, and of gold! Its horns - they shall be of brilliant brass.

Storm demons I will hitch to it for your mules!

There shall be a great fragrance of cedar on the occasions when you enter our house

Its very threshold, the very dais itself - As your feet touch them your feet shall be kissed by them!

And all the kings and the lords and the princes - all of them -

These shall be humbled before you.

I will make all the yield of the hills,

All the yield of the plains be brought to you as tribute.

All your goats shall bear twins

All your sheep shall bear twins.

The ass shall better the mule for burdens,

While your chariot horses will be famed for their speed in racing.

[Here three lines are mutilated and cannot be read. Gilgamesh replies]

'But what advantage would it be to me to take you in marriage?

In the cold season you would surely fail me!

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Like a pan full of burning coals which go out.

You are the great palace which collapses on its honored guests,

The head-dress that unravels, the pitch that blackens the hands of the bearer,

The water-skin that rubs the back raw as it is carried, the limestone which undermines the rampart

A siege engine thrown up against the walls of the enemy, the shoe that pinches the foot of its owner.

What man did you love forever?

What throughout your life is there that you have kept for long?

Come, I will tell you the tales of your former relationships:

For Tammuz, your young husband, for him we wail year after year!

He who dies each autumn and comes back each spring!

The spotted shepherd-bird you loved, that bird which rolls and tumbles in its flight,

And you struck him, broke his wing.

And now he stands in the groves and calls:

"Kappi!" - that bird's hoarse cry, which is to say, "My wing!"

Then you loved the lion, perfect in its strength, but you dug for him seven pits and again seven.

Then you loved the stallion, great in battle, but you made for him the whip and thong and the spur.

And you decreed that he run seven-double hours,

And that it is for him to make muddy and then to drink.

For his mother, Silili, you decreed lamentation!

You also loved the shepherd with his herd, he piled ash cakes high for you without cease,

And on this burning charcoal daily offered you his young and succulent kids

But you struck him, and turned him into a wolf so that now his own herd boys drive him off,

And his own dogs bite at his thighs.

Then you loved Ishullanu, the palm-gardener of your father, who brought you baskets of dates everyday

You raised your eyes and looked at him, and you seduced him.

But Ishullanu said to you: "What are you asking of me?"

Has not my mother baked, have I not eaten,

That I should partake of food with such strong odor, with such foul stench?

He brightened your table every day.

You raised your eyes and looked at him, and as he was not willing to be yours,

You struck him and turned him into a mole.

If you loved me, would you treat me the same as them?

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Can mere reeds protect one from the frost, as the saying is?"

When Inanna heard this - She, the Goddess of Love and Battle heard this -  
She was infuriated.

She went to heaven immediately and saw her father An, the Sky God.

Before him she wept, and before her mother, Antum, she wept.

And she said: 'Father, Gilgamesh has insulted me!

He enumerated all my evil deeds! He has said I am foul odor and I am evil!'

An spoke, said to the glorious Inanna:

'Are you the father? You have quarreled with Gilgamesh the King.

And so he told you your evil deeds, The odor of them.'

Inanna spoke to her father An: 'Father, please give me the Bull of Heaven

So that he can smite King Gilgamesh even in his own home.

And if you don't give me the Bull of Heaven, I will go down to the Underworld and smash its doors!

I will place those above below! The doors will be left wide open and the dead will get out,

Eat all the food, and the dead will then outnumber the living!

An spoke, said to glorious Inanna:

'If you desire from the Bull of Heaven, there will be seven years of barren husks in the land of Uruk.

Have you gathered enough grain for the people?

Have you grown enough fodder for the beasts?'

Inanna spoke, said to her father An:

'I have stored enough grain for the people,

I have provided enough fodder for the animals.

If there should be seven years of no crops

I have gathered grain for the people

I have grown fodder for the beasts.'

[Here three lines are lost]

When An heard this speech of Inanna

He gave her the tether of the Bull of Heaven, so that Inanna might lead it to Uruk.

When she came to the gates of Uruk

[Here one line is missing]

He went down to the river, with the snort of the Bull of Heaven, pits were opened

And a hundred men of Uruk fell into them.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

With his second snort, pits were opened and two hundred young men of Uruk fell into them.

With his third snort, pits were opened and Enkidu fell in one of them.

Enkidu leapt out of it and seized the bull by the horns.

The Bull of Heaven retreated before him and brushed him with the hairy tip of its tail,

As it spewed foam from its mouth.

Enkidu chased the Bull of Heaven;

He seized him by the thick hairy tip of his tail.

[Here three lines are mutilated]

He thrust his sword between the nape of his neck

And the horns of his head

When they had killed the Bull, they tore out his heart, and placed it before Shamash the Sun.

They stepped back and fell down before Shamash in homage.

Then the two brothers sat down.

Then Inanna mounted up upon the wall of the city, there at ramparted Uruk and,

Springing on to the battlements, she uttered a curse:

'Woe be unto you, Gilgamesh, who has insulted me by slaying the Bull of Heaven!'

When Enkidu heard the curse of Inanna, he tore loose the right thigh of the Bull of Heaven,

Flung it skywards up into her face:

'If I could reach you,

I would do the same to you as to him!

I would hang his entrails at your side!'

Then Inanna called priestesses of the temple,

And with them she set up a wailing lamentation

Over the right thigh of the Bull of Heaven.

(There is no break here, but it is as well to explain that the ancient Egyptian constellation of the Thigh, which was in fact a bull's thigh was the ancient equivalent to our Plough or Great Bear or Big Dipper - all these three being the same). (2)

But Gilgamesh called the armorers and craftsmen

The artisans admired the thickness of the bull's horns

Each horn is thirty minas of lapis-lazuli;

Two fingers thick is the coating of each

Six measures of oil would measure their capacity,

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Would be what they would contain, this being 1,500 quarts.

And just this much ointment did he then present

To his own special god, Lugulbanda the Pure.

As for the horns, he brought them

Into his princely bedchamber and hung them there.

They washed their hands in the Euphrates,

They embraced one another as they went on,

Riding through the main streets of Uruk.

There heroes are all gathered round to see them,

Gilgamesh to the sacred lyre-maids of Uruk,

Says these words:

'Who is the most splendid among the heroes?

Who is the most glorious among men?'

Who has strength and courage no one can match?

'Gilgamesh is the most splendid among heroes!

Gilgamesh is the most glorious among men!' (3)

In his palace, Gilgamesh holds a great feast.

Down the heroes lie on their night couches,

Enkidu also lies down, and sees a dream,

Enkidu rises up to reveal his dream,

Saying to his friend:

'My friend, why are the Great Gods in council?'

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

### **TABLET VII**

'..... then twilight came.'

And Enkidu said to Gilgamesh:

'My friend, hear a dream I had last night. An, the Sky God, Enlil, his son,

Enki, son of Enlil, and Shamash the Sun, all held council together, and An said to Enlil:

'Because they have slain the Bull of Heaven, and have slain Humbaba,

He who watched over the mountains, watched them from Cedar Tree - one among of them

Must die!' - So said An.

But Great Enlil said, 'Enkidu must die!

Gilgamesh, however, shall not die!'

Then heavenly Shamash the Sun answered great Enlil:

'Was it not at your very own command that these necessities took place -

The slaying of the Bull of Heaven and Humbaba?

And now you say, innocent Enkidu should die?'

But at this Enlil became enraged.

He turned in anger to heavenly Shamash:

'You say that just because you used to go down to them everyday as if you yourself were his comrade!'

Enkidu lay down before Gilgamesh, very ill.

Gilgamesh, his tears running down, said to him:

' My brother, my dear brother! They wish to let me go but to take you as the price for this!'

Also he said:

'Must I sit down by the spirit of the dead,

By the door of the spirit of the dead?

And never again to see my dear brother with my eyes?

[Here there is a considerable break. As can be seen from what follows, Enkidu curses the fates and the stages that have led him to leave the wild steppe and coming to a civilized life. We can assume that in the lost portion he gave further vent to his frustration and dejection and that Gilgamesh too made complaint against Enkidu's unfortunate fate and the decision of the gods that Enkidu must die and be taken from him]

Enkidu.... lifted up his eyes, spoke as if to the door,

As though the door were human:

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

'O door! Door to the forest! Insensible thing!

Possessed of no understanding!

From a distance of 20 leagues I thought your timber fine! Then I beheld the lofty cedar!

Nowhere in the land is there any semblance, any compare with your wood!

Six dozen are the cubits to your height, two dozen are the cubits to your width...

Truly a craftsman of Nippur made you....

But, had I known that this beauty of yours would bring to pass such disaster,

I would have taken the axe and would have....

I would have made a reed frame to [encompass?] you

[Here several lines are lost. When Enkidu's speech resumes, he makes clear that he constructed the door himself, evidently from the felled cedar tree he so admired. A recurring theme of Sumerian and Babylonian literature is the felling of a sacred tree and making some special or sacred object from it.]

'O door, I made you, set you in place

.....you

When I am gone, may a king.....you

Or perhaps a god..... you.

He may place his name on you, eradicating mine.'

He ripped out.... he tore down.

As Gilgamesh listened, hurriedly his....

As Gilgamesh heard his friend Enkidu speak thus, his tears were flowing.

Gilgamesh opened his mouth, said to Enkidu:

'.....illustrious, strange things may be spoken by the wise.

Why does your heart say such strange things, my friend?

Precious was your dream, but the terror is great.

Your limbs are paralyzed like .....

But despite the terror, precious is the dream:

Misery was released for the healthy; woe befell the healthy from this dream.

.... and I will pray to the Great Gods.'

[Here eleven lines are missing.]

With daybreak Enkidu looked up, tears streaming from him to radiant Shamash the Sun:

'I pray, o Shamash, that the hunter, that rogue, he who hunted not

Who stopped my getting as much game as my friend -

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Let him not get as much game as his friend.

Take what he owns, lessen his power.

May his way offend you.

May all the game escape from him.

May his heart be never full.'

And he bitterly cursed the priestess:

'O you, priestess, I pronounce your fate -

A fate which shall be yours for all eternity!

Hearken, for I curse you now with a great curse and may my curses attack you on the instant:

Your home shall be the road....

The dust of the crossroads is where you shall dwell.

The desert shall be your bed.

The shadow of the wall is where you shall linger,

Your feet torn by thorns and brambles -

Because you have brought death upon me'

When these words were heard by Shamash the Sun,

Straight away he called down from heaven to Enkidu:

' Enkidu, why do you curse the priestess who introduced you to food fit for the gods,

To drink fit for kings? She who clothed you nobly!

She who gave you Gilgamesh as friend, and now Gilgamesh is a brother to you.

Has he not placed you on a beautiful couch?

You are on the throne of ease, the throne at his left hand

So that the rulers of the earth kiss your feet!

Lamentations and weepings from the people of Uruk shall he cause for you;

Those with hearts full of joy he shall make mourn

When you have turned back.

He will let his body become long-haired, he will clothe himself with the skin of the dog,

And he will roam the steppe.'

These words of Shamash quieted Enkidu, calmed his angry heart.

[Here two lines are missing. Enkidu retracts his cursing of the priestess and blesses her instead]

'O you priestess, I pronounce your fate - the mouth has cursed you

It turns and blesses you.



## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Lords and governors shall love you he who is one league away shall smite his thigh in admiration of you

He who is two leagues away shall shake his hair in admiration of you

May you be laden with carnelian, lapis lazuli and gold.

And he who does not care for you - may he be paid back!

May his home be stripped,

His full storehouse emptied.

May the priest lead you into the presence of the gods.

Enkidu, cast down in sorrow,

Drifts into a sad and lonely sleep.

Then in the night to his friend

He pours out the heaviness of his heart:

'My friend, this night I dreamed.

The whole cosmos was roaring

And an echo resounded from the earth:

This is an omen of death,

As I was standing there between the heavens and earth,

I saw a young man whose face was dark.

His face was like Zu, bird god from the Underworld.

.... with claws like an eagle's talons.

He overcame me..... he climbs..... submerged me.

[Here seven lines are missing]

He transformed me into a double of his body,

So that my arms were now clad in feathers like those of a bird.

Fixing his gaze on me, he led me to the House of Darkness

There where Irkalla lives, He, the God of the Dead.

No one who enters that house comes forth again.

It is the one-way road from which there is no return;

Those residing there are bereft of the light for ever,

Where dust is their food and mud their sustenance.

They are dressed as birds, with garments of wing feathers.

They see no light but crouch in darkness,

There in the House of Dust, into which I came,

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

I saw kings, their crowns set aside -

Those who had once ruled on earth through the ages, humbled,

No longer were they born to the crown.

And the twins of An and Enlil were there

Serving the roast meat, the fried and baked food,

Pouring cold water out from the skins.

In the house of Dust where I came sit the high priest and the acolyte,

Sit the cantor and the shaman, sit the attendants of the sacred ablutions,

There sat Etana, once king of Kish,

There sat Sumugan, he, the god of the Cattle,

And also Ereshkigal, who is the Queen of the Underworld.

Belit-Seri, her scribe, kneels before here.

And she reads out from a tablet to her.

She, the scribe, lifts her head, sees me and says:

'Who brought this one?'

[Here 50 lines are missing. But the following fragment where Gilgamesh is speaking is believed to come from the lost remainder of this tablet]

'Remember all my travels with him!

My friend saw a dream of unfavorable omen

The day the dream was ended.

Enkidu lay stricken one day, two days, Enkidu's suffering on his bed worsened:

A third day, a fourth day...

A 5th day, a 6th day, a 7th,

An 8th, a 9th and a tenth day.

Enkidu's suffering on his bed increases;

An 11th day, a 12th day...

Enkidu lay stricken on his bed of agony.

Finally he called Gilgamesh and spoke to him:

'My friend..... has cursed me!

Not like one who falls in battle shall I die,

For I feared the battle....

My friend, one who dies in battle is blessed.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

But as for me...'

### **TABLET VIII**

On the horizon there appeared

The first intimations of dawn (1)

And Gilgamesh said to his friend,

'Enkidu, your mother, the gazelle, your father, the wild ass -

These together produced you.

They whose mark is their tails reared you

As did the cattle of the steppes and of all pastures,

May the tracks of Enkidu in the Cedar Forest

Weep for you!

May they not be hushed by night or by day.

Uruk of the wide ramparts - may its elders

Weep for you!

May the finger which blesses what is behind us

Weep for you!

May the country echo with sorrow like a mother!

May... Weep for you!

In whose midst we....

May the bear, the hyena, the panther,

May the tiger, the stag, the leopard, the lion,

May the ox, the deer, the ibex -

May all the wild of the steppe

Weep for you!

May the River Ulla - may it weep for you!

The river by whose banks

We strolled together - friends

May the pure Euphrates, where we drew water for the skins

May it weep for you!

May the warriors of Uruk of the wide ramparts

Weep for you!

...we slew the Bull of Heaven -

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

May.... weep for you!

Those in Eridu who sang your paeans -

May they weep now!

May all those who have praised you -

May they weep!

All those who provided you with grain -

May they weep for you!

[Here there is a considerable break, during which Enkidu finally dies. The text resumes with Gilgamesh lamenting his friend's death:]

'Hear me O elders!

It is for Enkidu, for Enkidu, my friend, that I weep.

I wail like a woman, so bitterly lamenting the goodly axe in which my hand trusted,

Hanging by my side, The dagger resting in my belt and the shield which went before me.

My richest-trimmed robe for the festivities - an evil force arose, seized them all from me!

Oh, my friend, younger than myself, you hunted the wild ass in the hills,

You chased the panther on the steppe!

Oh, Enkidu, my younger friend, how you hunted the wild ass in the hills

Chased the panther on the steppe!

We two have conquered all, climbed all

We were the ones who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven

We were the ones who laid hold of Humbaba,

He who lived in the Cedar Forest

What is this sleep that has now come over you?

You have gone dark and cannot hear me!'

But Enkidu did not raise his head.

Gilgamesh felt for Enkidu's heartbeat, but there was none.

Then he drew a veil across Enkidu's face as if he were a bride.

He roared like a lioness who had her cubs taken away from her.

Backwards and forwards he went before his friend,

And tore his hair, strewing it around.

He tore off his beautiful clothes, flung them down as though they were filth.

And then on the horizon there appeared the first intimations of dawn.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Then Gilgamesh proclaimed unto the land

'Come smith, come workman, come fashioner of copper,

Come worker in gold, come inscriber in metal!

Shape you the image of my friend!

My friend whose stature is beyond compare;

May his breast be lapis lazuli, may his body be of gold.

[From a strange document called the Letter of Gilgamesh which in many respects is fantastic and unreliable, a few more possible details of the statue may possibly be gleaned as they were known in the tradition:]

'Let there be many large.... of red ochre

And lapis lazuli set in solid gold,

And let them be bound on the breast of my friend Enkidu

One block of solid gold - let its weight be 30 minas

I will fix on the breast of Enkidu, my friend.

Let there be many gaz-stones, much jasper, lapis-lazuli,

All the stones that there are in the high mountains.

Let them be sent on horses to the home-country.

May beautiful amulets be made out of them.

Fresh fruit out of season, anything precious and exotic which my eyes have never seen,

For an offering let them be loaded with the silver and gold,

Let them drift down the River Euphrates, carry them to the quay of Babylon

and my eyes shall see them and my heart shall be confident.'

'I placed you on a beautiful couch. You were in the throne of ease,

The throne at my left hand, so that the rulers of the earth kissed your feet!

Lamentations and weepings from the people of Uruk shall I now cause for you;

Those with hearts full of joy shall I make mourn.

And after you have been laid to rest I shall let my body become shaggy,

I will clothe myself in the skin of a dog, and I shall roam the steppe!

On the horizon there appeared, the first intimations of dawn;

Gilgamesh loosened his band.....

[Here many lines are lost, with only a few fragmentary matches mentioning 'to my friend', 'your sword', 'likeness', and 'to the place of Mercury' (2). The following brief passage has been preserved:]

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

...Jude of the Fifty Great Gods, the Anunnaki...

When Gilgamesh heard this

He conceived in his heart the concept, or image of the river.

On the horizon there appeared

The first intimations of dawn

Gilgamesh fashioned....

Brought out a large tablet of elammaqu wood,

Took a carnelian bowl, filled it with honey

Took a lapis-lazuli bowl, filled it with milk curd

... he adorned and exposed to Shamash the Sun

[The rest of the Tablet, a very large portion, is lost. In the missing sections, the funeral and burial of Enkidu evidently took place.]

### **NOTES TO TABLET VIII**

1. These two lines are repeated at intervals throughout the tablet. Their inclusion is neither accidental nor for poetic purposes but rather reflects the obsession of the Babylonian astronomers/priests with what are known as heliacal risings of key stars and planets. A heliacal rising takes place when a star or planet rises over the horizon at the same moment as the first intimations of dawn. The Egyptians (much of whose astro-religious concepts passed over into Sumerian and hence Babylonian culture) based their main calendar on the heliacal rising of the star Sirius, which was given far greater prominence than the mundane solar and lunar calendars.
2. The Babylonian name for Mercury here - Bibbu- might perhaps be a borrowing from the Egyptian beb, 'to go round', 'to revolve', 'to circulate'. Since Bibbu has been known to be applied to Mars and Saturn on occasion, and there are also several textual references for its use as a general planetary term of some sort, its real meaning may well have been something like circler, in the same manner in which the Greek word for planet really meant wanderer. Its use for Mercury could simply reflect that Mercury of all the planets is the great circler, with a rapid looping orbit (as seen from earth).

## *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

### **TABLET IX**

Gilgamesh roams the steppe and weeps bitter tears

For Enkidu, his friend:

'Shall I not die like Enkidu? Woe gnaws at my entrails, I fear death.

So I roam the steppe. I must go to see Ziusudra, the Survivor of the Flood

He, the son of Ubara-Tutu. Immediately shall I travel the wheel-rim (1) to him.

At night I come to the Gates of the Mountains.

Gripped by fear, I saw lions. I lifted my head to the Moon God, offered prayers.

My prayers went out to the .... of the gods:

'O God of the Moon, do you preserve me!'

He laid himself down and then awoke from a dream.

There in the dream he had seen [lodestones] (2)

Rejoicing in life they were. In his hand he raised an axe,

He drew his dagger from his belt, he descended upon them like an arrow (3).

He struck at them, smashed them into pieces.

[Here many lines are lost, with only a few scattered words surviving. Six lines along, a line commences with the female pronoun she; the identity of the female personage in this missing section cannot even be guessed at, but she probably appeared in another dream and could have been Siduri [see next tablet], thereby repeating the pattern of premonitory dreaming.]

The mountain is called Mashu (4)

And so he arrived at Mashu Mountain which keeps watch every day

Over the rising and setting of the Sun God, whose tips reach the zenith of heaven,

And whose rim (5) reaches the depths of the Un,

Scorpion-Men (6) guard the commencement of its motion (7).

Awful their terror, their glance is death (8);

The splendor of their scintillation (9) disturbs the mountains

Which keep watch over the rising and the setting of the Sun God

When Gilgamesh observed (10) them, his visage was darkened with terror, with fear.

Regaining his composure, he approaches them.

The Scorpion-Man called to his wife,

'Look who comes, his body is made of flesh of the gods.'

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

The Scorpion-Man's wife replied,

'He is 2/2 god, 1/3 man'.

The Scorpion-Man calls out,

Cries to the offspring of the gods:

'Why have you come this far a journey? What brings you here before me?

You have made a traverse of the celestial Sea - Its crossings are difficult.

I wish to learn the meaning of your coming.'

[The next line appears to be an enquiry about 'your way' or 'your road', or the road taken by Gilgamesh.

When the text resumes, Gilgamesh is replying to the Scorpion-Man and mentioning Ziusudra, the Babylonian/Sumerian Noah:]

'I have come in search of life, to see Ziusudra, my forefather - he who survived the Flood

And joined the Assembly of the Gods, I wish to ask him about life and death.'

The Scorpion-Man opened his mouth to speak, said to Gilgamesh:

'There never was a mortal, Gilgamesh, never one who could do that.

No one has travelled the mountain's path (12).

For twelve double-hours its bowels....Dense is the darkness and there is no light.

To the rising of the Sun.....

To the setting of the Sun.....

To the setting of the Sun.....'

[Many lines are missing here. The Scorpion-Man is believed in the missing portion to have described the journey double-hour by double-hour [see note 13]. When the text resumes, Gilgamesh is speaking:]

'Whether it be in sorrow, whether it be in pain,

In cold, in heat, in sighing, in weeping, I will go!

Let the gate of the mountain now be opened!'

The Scorpion-Man opened his mouth to speak,

Said to Gilgamesh:

'Go, then, Gilgamesh, go you forth.

May you cross the mountains of Mashu,

May you traverse the mountains and ranges.

May you go in safety.

The gate of the mountain is now open to you!'

When Gilgamesh heard this, when he heard the words of the Scorpion-Man,



## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

He travelled from the east to west, along the road of the Sun.

When he had gone one double-hour, dense was the darkness and there was no light.

This permitted him no sight of its front or his rear when he had gone two double hours

Dense was the darkness and there was no light.

This permitted him no sight of its front or his rear.

When he had gone three double-hours

Dense was the darkness and there was no light.

This permitted him no sight of its front or his rear

When he had gone four double hours

Dense was the darkness and there was no light.

This permitted him no sight of its front or his rear.

When he had gone five double-hours

Dense was the darkness and there was no light.

This permitted him no sight of its front or his rear

When he had gone six double hours

Dense was the darkness and there was no light.

This permitted him no sight of its front or his rear.

When he had gone seven double-hours

Dense was the darkness and there was no light.

This permitted him no sight of its front or his rear

When he had gone eight double hours, he cried out.

Dense was the darkness and there was no light.

This permitted him no sight of its front or his rear.

When he had gone nine double-hours, he felt the morning breeze.

It was fanning his face

Dense was the darkness and there was no light.

This permitted him no sight of its front or his rear

When he had gone ten double hours

He knows the moment of rising is near.

He is impatient for the end of the double hours.

When he had gone eleven double hours

He rose just before the Sun

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

When he had gone twelve double

Day had grown bright (13)

Upon seeing the bejeweled shrubs, he approaches them.

The carnelian bears its fruit and hung it is with goodly vines,

The lapis lazuli bears leaves, lush fruit also hangs from it

It is fine to the eye.

[The remaining fifty lines of this tablet are mutilated or lost. From the fragmentary words surviving we can see that the description of the garden of jewels continued, for at least six different stones and minerals are mentioned, but they are merely stray words in an otherwise obliterated text.]

### **NOTES TO TABLET IX**

1. The word used in the original text -allak- means rim of a wheel, and is yet another reference to cosmic orbital motion. Similarly, allaku means 'wanderer', which in many cultures such as the Greek and Egyptian was what the planets were called, and it also means 'messenger', a concept often associated to the planet Mercury, because of its rapid shuttlings back and forth in the sky. Such a busy planet rushing rapidly to and fro was quite naturally seen as a wanderer.

2. See Tablet X, note 5.

4. All scholars have expressed puzzlement over the name Mashu [Heidel doubted the word was Babylonian]. I believe it is a borrowing of the Egyptian ma Shu, which means 'Behold the Sun God'. This fits the context perfectly as well as being linguistically sound.

6. The word girtablilu, Scorpion-Man, is a reference to all or part of what we now call Scorpio.

13. Gilgamesh's passage through the darkness of the half of the sky below the horizon, and rising just before the sun in the east again is a perfect description of the heliacal rising of a star, planet or constellation, as seen by an ancient astronomer.

## *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

### **TABLET X**

[The first line is broken off the tablet. Gilgamesh is being addressed by an unidentified character]

.....  
Eating the flesh of wild things, dressed in their skins  
O Gilgamesh, this is a thing which has not happened  
No, not so long as my wind shall drive the waters.'  
Distressed at heart, Shamash the Sun  
Went to Gilgamesh and said to him:  
'Whence are you directing yourself, Gilgamesh? You shall not find the life you seek.'  
But to valiant Shamash Gilgamesh speaks:  
'After travelling, after roaming the steppe, shall I merely lay my head  
Down into the earth's guts? And then sleep -  
Sleep forever? No! Let me see the Sun! See the Sun and be sated with light!  
If there is light enough, then the darkness shrinks away  
May the light of Shamash the Sun be seen even by he who is dead!'  
(Many lines are lost here. Four different versions of the remainder of this tablet are known (Old  
Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite and Hurrian).  
- the last  
Siduri the Refresher, who dwells by the celestial Sea's edge,  
Who sits there enthroned at the confluence of the rivers,  
For her they have made a jug,  
For her they have made a golden vat  
In which to make the mash for the beverage  
She is covered with a veil and Gilgamesh comes up to her and...  
He is clad in skins of dogs, the flesh of the gods is in his body  
But in his entrails there is woe; his face is that of one who has come from afar  
The Refresher gazes into the distance and says to herself,  
Within her heart takes counsel:  
'Surely this one will do murder! Where can he be directing himself...?'  
And as she saw him, she, the Refresher, locked the door  
Barred the gate, secured the bolt.  
But Gilgamesh heard her.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Held up his pointed staff and placed it against the door

Gilgamesh says to her, says to the Refresher:

'Refresher, what have you see

That leads you to....

Lock your door, bar your gate, secure the bolt?

I will smash the door, shatter the gate!' (2)

[Here several lines are lost. When the text resumes in the Old Babylonian Version, Siduri has taken off her veil come out and shown herself to Gilgamesh, now speaking to her]

'He who endured many hardships with me, whom I so dearly loved - Enkidu;

Yes, he who endured my hardships with me!

He now has gone to the fate that awaits mankind!

Day and night I have wept for him, I would not give him over for burial

For what if he had risen at my beseeching?

Six days and seven nights I waited until a worm fell out of his nose;

Since he has gone there is no life left for me.

I have roamed the steppe like a hunter but oh, Refresher, now that I have seen your face,

Let me not see Death, which I so dread!'

The Refresher said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'Gilgamesh, whence do you direct yourself? You shall not find the life you seek,

For at the creation of mankind the gods allotted Death to men.

They retained life in their own hands.

Gilgamesh, let your belly be full, make you merry by day and by night.

Make everyday a day of feasting and of rejoicing dance and play, by day, by night,

Let your clothes be sparkling and fresh wash your hair, bathe your body

Attend to the babe who holds you by the hand, take your wife and let her rejoice in you.

For this is the lot of mankind to enjoy, but immortal life is not for men.'

[Here several lines are lost]

Gilgamesh said to her, said to Siduri:

'O Refresher, what did you say thus to me? My heart is stricken for Enkidu, my friend.

O Refresher, you dwell here on the shore of the Sea.

You can see into its furthest reaches, all that is therein.

Show me the way to cross it.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

If it may be allowed I would cross the Sea.'

The Refresher said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'Gilgamesh, there has never been anyone who had done this thing.

The way across the sea, who has taken it?'

Gilgamesh says to her, says to the Refresher:

'I slew the watchman of the forest. He, Humbaba - he of the Cedar Forest.

In the mountain passes I slew lions.'

Siduri said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'If you are Gilgamesh, who slew the watchman, who slew Humbaba - he of the Cedar Forest -

And slew lions in the mountain passes, seized and killed the bull that comes down from heaven -

Then why are your cheeks wasted?

Why is your face sunken,

Why is your heart so sad,

Why are your features worn,

Why in your entrails is their woe,

Why is your face that of one who has come from afar?

Why is your countenance seared by heat and by cold?

And why do you roam over the steppe

Like one pursuing a mere puff of wind?'

Gilgamesh says to her, says to Siduri:

'O Refresher, why should my cheeks not be wasted?

My face sunken, my heart sad, my features worn?

Why not in my entrails be woe?

And my face - why should it not be that of one who has come from afar?

As for my countenance -

Why should it not be seared by heat and cold?

And as for my roaming over the steppe

As if for a mere puff of wind, why not?

My friend, younger than myself,

He hunted the wild ass in the hills,

He chased the panther on the steppe,

Enkidu, my friend, younger than myself,

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Who hunted the wild ass in the hills,  
Who chased the panther on the steppe,  
We two who conquered all, climbed all,  
We who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven,  
We who laid hold of Humbaba,  
My friend whom I loved so dearly,  
Who endured all hardships with me,  
He now has gone to the fate that awaits mankind!  
Six days and seven nights I wept over for him  
Until a worm fell out his nose.  
Fearing death I roam over the steppe  
The fate of my friend lies heavy upon me.  
On distant ways I roam the steppe.  
The fate of Enkidu, my friend, lies heavy upon me,  
How can I be silent? How be still?  
My friend whom I loved has turned to clay!  
And I, shall too, like him, lie down  
Never to rise -  
Never again -  
Forever and ever?'

Gilgamesh says to her, says to the Refresher:  
'O Gilgamesh, there has never  
Never been a crossing. None who came since the beginning of days  
None could cross  
Only valiant Shamash the Sun makes the crossing of the Sea.  
Who other than Shamash the Sun can cross it?  
Difficult is the place of crossing,  
Difficult the way to it.  
In between are the Waters of Death  
Which bar the approaches!  
Where would you cross the Sea, Gilgamesh?  
And when you arrived at the Waters of Death, what would you do?

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Ziusudra's boatman is there, Gilgamesh.

His name is Urshanabi (4).

With him are the lodestones (5).

In the forest he picks urnu-snakes (6).

Let your face behold him.

If it be possible, make the crossing with him.

If it not be possible, retrace your steps.'

When Gilgamesh heard this,

In his hand he raised his axe

He drew his dagger from his belt,

He slipped into the forest,

And went down to them.

He descended upon them like an arrow.

In the forest....

When Urshanabi saw the flash of the dagger,

And heard the axe....

He struck his head..... Gilgamesh

Seized the wings..... the breast,

The lodestones..... and the boat.

[After these fragmentary lines, many are missing entirely. By the time the text resumes, Urshanabi and Gilgamesh have met and are in discussion.]

Urshanabi said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'Why are your cheeks wasted?

Why is your face sunken,

Why is your heart so sad,

Why are your features worn,

Why in your entrails is their woe,

Why is your face that of one who has come from afar?

Why is your countenance seared by heat and by cold?

And why do you roam over the steppe

Like one pursuing a mere puff of wind?'

Gilgamesh said to him, said to Urshanabi:

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

'O Urshanabi, why should my cheeks not be wasted?  
My face sunken, my heart sad, my features worn?  
Why not in my entrails be woe?  
And my face - why should it not be that of one who has come from afar?  
As for my countenance -  
Why should it not be seared by heat and cold?  
And as for my roaming over the steppe  
As if for a mere puff of wind, why not?  
My friend, younger than myself,  
He hunted the wild ass in the hills,  
He chased the panther on the steppe,  
Enkidu, my friend, younger than myself,  
Who hunted the wild ass in the hills,  
Who chased the panther on the steppe,  
We two who conquered all, climbed all,  
We who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven,  
We who laid hold of Humbaba,  
My friend whom I loved so dearly,  
Who endured all hardships with me,  
He now has gone to the fate that awaits mankind!  
Six days and seven nights I wept over for him  
Until a worm fell out his nose.  
Fearing death, I roam over the steppe,  
The fate of my friend lies heavy upon me.  
On distant ways I roam the steppe.  
The fate of Enkidu, my friend, lies heavy upon me.  
How can I be silent?  
How be still?  
My friend whom I loved has turned to clay!  
And I, shall too, like him, lie down,  
Never to rise -  
Never again -



## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Gilgamesh also says to him, says to Urshanabi:

'Now, Urshanabi, which is the way to Ziusudra,

He who survived the Flood?

What is the special sign?

Give me, o, give me its special sign!

If it be possible, I will make a crossing of the Sea.

If it not be possible, I will roam the steppe!'

Urshanabi said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'Gilgamesh, you have hindered the crossing -

With your hands you have done this!

You have smashed the lodestones.

O Gilgamesh the lodestones bear me along,

Help me avoid touching the Waters of Death.

In your anger you did smash them,

The lodestones which I kept to help me get across!

You have also picked the urnu-snakes.

The lodestones are smashed

And there are no urnus....

Gilgamesh take the axe in your hand,

Cut three hundred punting-poles (7) which are smooth.

..... the lashes like a spear.

.....in the ship.....'

[The above incorporated an Old Babylonian fragment relatively recently discovered, which ends here.

The main Assyrian version now continues, but the number of the poles is different. Instead of 300,

Gilgamesh is only asked to cut 120.] (8)

'You have smashed the lodestones,

You have picked the urnu-snakes.

The lodestones are smashed.

The urnu is not in the forest.

Gilgamesh, in your hand raise your axe,

Go down into the forest, cut twice-sixty punting-poles,

Each of sixty-cubits.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Put the knobs of bitumen on one end of each  
Attach ferrules to their other ends,  
Then bring them to me!  
When Gilgamesh heard this,  
In his hand he raised his axe,  
He drew his dagger from his belt,  
He went down into the forest,  
He cut twice-sixty punting poles, each of sixty cubits.  
He put the knobs of bitumen on them,  
He attached the ferrules,  
And he brought them to Urshanabi.  
Gilgamesh and Urshanabi then boarded the boat.  
They launched the boat on the waves  
And they sailed away.  
By the 3<sup>rd</sup> day they had gone as far  
As a normal voyage of a month and 15 days.  
And thus Urshanabi arrived  
At the Waters of Death.  
Urshanabi said to him, said to Gilgamesh:  
'Press on, Gilgamesh, take a punting-pole.  
But let not your hand touch the Waters of Death!  
Take a 2nd, 3rd, a 4th pole, Gilgamesh,  
Take a 5th, a 6th, a 7th pole, Gilgamesh,  
Take an 8th, a 9th, a 10th pole, Gilgamesh,  
Take an 11th, a 12 pole, Gilgamesh!  
At twice sixty, Gilgamesh had used up the poles.  
Then Gilgamesh pulled off his shirt....  
With his hand he hand it aloft as a sail.  
Ziusudra peers into the distance.  
Speaking to his heart, He says these words, takes counsel with himself:  
'Why have the lodestones of the boat been broken?  
Why does one who is not her master ride in her?

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

The man who comes here is not one of my men

And....

I peer, but I cannot see...

I peer, but I cannot see...

I peer, but

[Many lines are missing at this point. Gilgamesh disembarks and meets Ziusudra. Fragmentary words here and there, however, make it clear that most of what is lost is mere repetition of the set questions and replies between them which Gilgamesh has already exchanged with both Siduri and Urshanabi. The text conveniently resumes as this exchange ends:]

Gilgamesh further said to him, said to Ziusudra:

'I behold you now, o Ziusudra, You whom they call the Faraway.

And that I might do this, I have been a wanderer over all the lands,

Have crossed many difficult mountains, crossed all the seas!

With waking I have been wearied.

My joints ache, are filled with woe.

My garments were worn out before I even came to Siduri the Refresher's house.

I have killed bear, hyena, lion, panther, tiger, stag, ibex,

All the wild of the steppe

And all the creeping things of the steppe

I ate their flesh, I wrapped myself in their skins,

... let them bar her gate, with pitch and bitumen....

(Here two lines are lost)

Ziusudra said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'O Gilgamesh, why so full of woe?

Who was created in the flesh of god

In the flesh of man....?

When your father and your mother

Made you, who.....?

When was there for Gilgamesh

In his feebleness....

Established any seat in the Assembly of the Gods

That you....

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Or ..... be given to him....

Like butter?...

Tahhu-flour...

And kakkushu-flour,

Which like....

....swift like....

And he like nibihu-garment

Since there is no....

There is no word of advice

.... before him Gilgamesh

.... their lord.....'

[Here thirty-three lines are lost. The text resumes with Ziusudra's wise remarks to Gilgamesh on the impossibility of permanence in this world:]

'Mankind, which like a reed stands fragile

A fine young man, a fine young woman....

These too must die.

Should no one see death?

Should no one meet then this end?'

[Here two lines are missing]

'Do we build a house to stand forever?

Are contracts sealed forever?

Do brothers divide their inheritance to last forever?

Does hatred remain in the heart forever?

Does the stream which has risen in spate

Bring torrents forever?

The dragonfly emerges and flies

But its face in the Sun for but a day

Is this forever?

From the days of yore there has been no permanence.

The sleeping and the dead - how alike they are!

Do the sleeping not compose a very picture of death?

The common man, the noble man,

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Once they have reached the end of life,  
Are all gathered in as one,  
By the Anunnaki, the Great Gods,  
And she, Mammetum,  
She of Fate -  
She decrees the destinies.  
Together they determine death  
Determine life  
As for life, its days are revealed,  
But as for death  
Its day is never revealed.'

### **NOTES ON TABLET X**

1. The Greek tradition of souls drinking the waters of Lethe or Forgetfulness, may have been derived from the tavern of the Babylonians. Campbell Thompson calls Siduri the provider of strong waters and the Wine Maker. Heidel calls her the barmaid, and Speiser refers to her as the ale-wife. Apparently Babylonian taverns were run by women rather than men, so that Siduri's sex is usual in this role and may have no special significance. I chose to call her Refresher instead of Barmaid or Ale-Wife.
7. Without compass or paddles (see notes 5 and 6 above) Urshanabi would need some other method of steering his boat - hence the request for punting-poles.
9. Punting poles exactly like this are still used in Iraq.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

### **TABLET XI**

Gilgamesh said to him, said to Ziusudra the Faraway:

'I look upon you now, Ziusudra, but your appearance is not strange. You are like myself. I had imagined you as a great warrior. But you lie on your side, reclining at ease.

Tell me, how did you enter the Assembly of the Gods - how find everlasting life?'

Ziusudra said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'O Gilgamesh, I will disclose unto you a hidden thing. Yes, a secret of the gods will I tell unto you:

You know the city Shuruppak, which lies upon the River Euphrates. That city was of great antiquity

And ancient were the gods who still lived within it

In their hearts they resolved, to bring on the Great Flood

In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamour. Enlil heard the clamour and he said to the gods in council, 'The uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel.' So the gods agreed to exterminate mankind

'Present there were An the Great God

Valiant Enlil, his son, Counselor of the Gods,

Their assistant Ninurta, the God of War and Hunting,

Ennugi, their inspector of canals,

And also Ninigiku, which is to say Enki -

For he too was present with them.

And Enki repeats what they say to Ziusudra,

Speaking through the wall of Ziusudra's reed hut:

'Reed hut, reed hut! Wall of the hut, wall of the hut!

Listen o reed hut! Consider, o wall of the hut!

O man of Shuruppak, o you son of Ubara-Tutu,

Tear down your hut of reeds,

Build of them a reed boat, abandon things.

Seek life, give up possessions, keep your soul alive!

And into the boat take the seed of all living creatures.

The boat you will build will have dimensions carefully measured

Its length and its width shall be equal,

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

And roof it as I have my subterranean watery abyss."

I understood and said to my lord Enki:

"My lord, behold. What have you commanded of me  
Shall I honor and carry out. But tell me, what shall I answer  
To the city, to the people, to the elders?"

Enki opened his mouth to speak, said to me, his servant:

"Thus, O Mortal, shall you speak to them, saying  
I have learned that the god Enlil is ill-disposed toward me  
No longer can I reside here in the city.  
Never again, no, never.

Can I turn my face to this soil which is Enlil's.

I must go down therefore,  
Down to dwell with my lord Enki,  
Towards the marshes of the south,  
And enter his sweet-watered Deep  
Into his very Abyss (2).

But he will shower down upon you  
Abundance and plenty.

The choicest of birds, the rarest of fishes.

Oh, what great harvest riches shall this land enjoy!

Yes, He who orders the grainheads in the evening  
What a shower of wheat shall He rain down upon you!" (3)

On the horizon there appeared

The first intimations of dawn.

The land was gathered about me.

[Here two lines are missing. When the text resumes, Ziusudra is still speaking to Gilgamesh]

The child brought bitumen,

The strong brought the rest of what was needed and on the fifth day I laid out the plan

The floor space was one iku (4)

Its sides were ten gar high; each edge of its square roof measured ten gar (5)

I delineated its exterior shape and fashioned it together,

Cross-pinned it six times (6), thus dividing it into seven (7)

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

And the ground plan I divided into nine parts (8), I drove water plugs into it,

Saw to the punting holes and laid up what was needful

Into the furnace I poured six [or three] shar measures (9) of bitumen

Followed by three shar measures of asphalt.

The basket-bearers carried three shar measures of oil

Besides one shar measures of oil stowed away for the boatman (10)

I slaughtered bullocks for the people, every day I slew sheep (11)

As though it were river water, I gave to the workmen

Red wine, white wine, must, oil

To feast as if it were New Year's day

I opened the container and laid my hands in unguent.

On the seventh day the boat was completed .....was very difficult

The edges of the floor above and below

Showed 2/3 of the floor [were above, 1/3 below?] (12)

Whatever I had I loaded aboard,

Whatever I had of silver I loaded aboard,

Whatever I had of gold I loaded aboard

Whatever I had of seed of all living creatures

I loaded aboard.

I caused all my family and kinsfolk to go aboard.

The beasts of the field, the wild creatures of the plain,

All the craftsmen - all these I made to go aboard.

Shamash the Sun had set for me a specific time, saying:

'When He who rains down His misfortune in the twilight

Does rain down His misfortune like a blight,

Then board your boat without further ado

And make sure your door is safely pulled to.'

That precise time had indeed arrived:

'When He who rains down His misfortune in the twilight

Does rain down His misfortune like a blight'.

[This rhymed utterance provides the true message of Enki's disguised message to the people of Shuruppak given earlier]



## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

I scrutinized all the weather signs;  
How awesome was the weather to behold!  
I boarded the boat without further ado and made sure that the door was safely pulled to.  
I committed the navigation of the great house and its contents  
To the boatman Puzur-Amurri (14).  
When on the horizon  
The first intimations of dawn  
A black cloud rose from the horizon (15)  
Inside it Adad the storm thundered,  
While Shullat and Hanish, the storm-heralds, rose ahead,  
Moving as advance messengers over hill and plain.  
Nergal, the God of the Underworld, tore out the posts.  
Ninurta, the God of War and Irrigation, came forth and burst the dikes.  
The Anunnaki - the Great Gods - raised their torches,  
Lighting up the land with their brightness.  
Astonishment at Adad the Storm reached to the very heavens.  
He turned to blackness all that had been visible.  
He broke the land like a pot.  
For a whole day the South Storm blew,  
Gathering speed as it blew, drowning the mountains,  
Overcoming the people as in battle.  
Brother saw not brother.  
From heaven no mortal could any longer be seen.  
Even the gods were struck by terror at the deluge,  
And, fleeing, they ascended to the celestial band of An (16).  
The gods cowered like dogs (17),  
Crouching by the outer wall of that celestial band.  
Inanna, Goddess of Love and Battle, cried out like a suffering mortal -  
She, the sweet-voiced,  
She, the Lady of the Gods,  
How did she lament aloud, crying:  
'Verily, the Old Age has crumbled into dust!

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Because I spoke evil in the Assembly of Gods!  
Oh, how could I command havoc for the destruction of my people  
When I myself gave birth to my people?  
Now the spawn of fishes, the sea is glutted with their bodies!  
The Anunnaki - the Great Gods - wept with her,  
Their lips were shut tight in distress in the Assembly, one and all.  
For six days and seven nights  
The flood wind blew as the South Storm swept the land.  
At sunrise in the seventh day  
The South Storm, bringer of the flood, and  
Which had fought like an army, abated its attack.  
The sea grew quieter, the storm subsided, the flood ceased.  
I looked at the weather; it had gone quiet.  
All men had returned to clay.  
The land had been leveled like a terrace.  
O opened a dove flap  
And light fell upon my face.  
I bowed, sat down and wept,  
Tears flowing down my cheeks.  
I peered in every direction but the sea was everywhere,  
In each of the 14 regions  
There emerged a mountain peak for that point (18).  
The boat came to rest on Mount Nisir (19).  
Mount Nisir held the boat fast,  
Allowing no shifting position.  
One day, a second day, Mount Nisir held the boat fast,  
Allowing no shifting position.  
A 3rd day, a 4th day and a 6th day, Mount Nisir held the boat fast,  
Allowing no shifting position.  
When the seventh day dawned,  
I brought a dove out and set it free.  
The dove went forth but then returned.

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

The dove found no resting-place and turned back (20).

I brought out a swallow and set it free.

The swallow went forth but then returned

The swallow found no resting-place and turned back (21).

I brought out a raven and set it free.

The raven flew forth but saw the waters were sinking,

She ate, circled, croaked, but did not return back.

Then I sent forth all the four winds

And offered a sacrifice

On the peak of the mountain

I poured out a libation.

Twice seven were the cult-vessels I set up,

Heaping upon their pot-stands sweet cane,

Cedar, myrtle,

The gods smelled the savor.

The gods gathered like fliers around the sacrifice.

Now when Inanna, the Lady of the Gods, arrived,

She lifted up the magnificent jewels which An the Great god

Had made according to her desire, and said:

'O ye gods here present!

Just as surely as I shall not forget

The lapis lazuli around my neck,

So shall I remember these days,

Never forgetting them.

Let the gods come to the offering.

But let not Enlil come to the offering;

For he, unreasoning, brought on the deluge

And delivered my people over to destruction!'

Now when Enlil arrived and saw the boat,

He waxed wroth,

He was filled with fury against the heavenly Igigi gods and said:

'What! - Has any mortal escaped?

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

No mortal was to survive the destruction!

Ninurta, God of War, opened his mouth to speak, said to valiant Enlil:

'Who besides the god Enki could devise such a plan?

The god Enki alone understands every matter.'

Enki opened his mouth to speak, saying to valiant Enlil:

'O wisest of gods, O great warrior hero,

How could you, taking no counsel,

Bring on the deluge?

He who has sinned, on him lay his sin.

He who has transgressed, on him lay his transgression

But oh be merciful, lest all be destroyed.

Be long suffering, that man may not perish.

Rather than your bringing on the deluge,

Oh, that a lion had come to diminish mankind!

Rather than you bringing on the deluge,

Oh, that a famine had arisen

To lay mankind low.

Rather than you bringing in the deluge

Oh, that Erra, god of Pestilence, had come

To strike mankind down.

What is more, it was not I

Not I who revealed the Secret of the Great Gods,

I allowed Ziusudra, he ho abounds in wisdom

To see a dream

It was thus that he perceived

The secret of the Great Gods

Now then take counsel concerning him.'

Then Enlil went up into the ship.

He grasped my hand,

He caused me to go aboard,

He caused my wife to go aboard,

He made her to kneel beside me

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

He stood there between us,  
He touched our foreheads and blessed us;  
"Until now, Ziusudra has been a more mortal  
But from now shall Ziusudra and his wife  
Be like unto us gods.  
Ziusudra shall reside far away -  
At the confluence of the celestial rivers -  
There shall he dwell!"  
And so they took me and made me reside far away,  
At the confluence of the celestial rivers.  
But now, o Gilgamesh, as for you,  
Who will assemble the gods for you  
That you may find the Life that you seek?  
Come, do not lie down, sleep not  
For six days and seven nights'. (22)  
As he sits on his haunches,  
Sleep breathes upon him like a light rain in a mist (23).  
Ziusudra says to her, says to his wife:  
'Behold, the strong one who seeks Life-Everlasting!  
Sleep breathes upon him like rain in a mist.'  
His wife says to him, to Ziusudra the Faraway:  
'Oh, touch him  
Let the man awake,  
That he may return in peace  
Along the route by which he came.  
That he may return to his land  
By the portal through which he came.;  
Ziusudra says to her, says to his wife:  
'Mankind being wicked, he will seek to deceive you.  
Bake some little cakes of bread  
And put them by his head.  
She put these by his head

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

And she marked on the wall the days he slept.

His first cake of bread dried out,

His second was gone bad,

His third was moist and soggy,

His fourth turned white,

His fifth had a moldy look,

His 6th was still fresh

His 7th - just as he was touched, he awoke.

Gilgamesh says to Ziusudra, the Faraway:

'Hardly did sleep steal over me, when suddenly you touched me and woke me!'

Ziusudra says to him

Says to Gilgamesh:

'Not so, Gilgamesh! Count your cakes of bread,

They will show you how many days you have slept.

The first cake is dried out,

The second is gone bad,

The third is moist and soggy,

The crust of the fourth has turned white,

The fifth has a moldy look,

The sixth is still fresh.

The seventh, the moment it was baked - at this instant you did awaken.'

Gilgamesh says to him

Says to Ziusudra the Faraway:

'Ah, but what shall I do, Ziusudra?

Where shall I go?

Now that the Snatcher has laid hold of my entrails?

Death lurks in my bedchamber, death follows my footsteps already!'

Ziusudra says to him,

Says to Urshanabi the Boatman

'Urshanabi, may the landing-place not welcome you.

May the place of crossing reject you!

He who approaches its surrounding rim

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Deny him its rim!' (25)

The man before whose face you have walked

Whose body is covered in long hair

The grace of whose form skins have distorted

Let him wash his long hair clean as snow in water -

Let him throw off his skins,

Let the sea carry them away,

So that the fairness of his body may be seen

Let him place a new band around his head

Let him cover his nakedness with a fresh garment

Until he will accomplish his journey

Let not his garment have a moldy look -

Let it be quite new.'

Urshanabi took him and brought him to the place of cleansing

He washed his long hair

He threw off his skins

That the sea might carry them away,

That the fairness of his body might be seen

He placed a new band around his head

He covered his nakedness with a fresh garment,

Until he should arrive in his city,

Until he should accomplish his journey.

The garment did not have a moldy look

But was quite new.

Gilgamesh and Urshanabi boarded the ship.

They launched the ship on the waves and they glided forth,

His wife says to him

Says to Ziusudra the Faraway:

'Gilgamesh has come hither,

He has wearied himself,

He has exerted himself.

What gift will you make to him (26)

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

That he may return to his land?'

That he, Gilgamesh, raised up his pole,  
And brought the ship near to the shore (27).

Ziusudra says to him

Says to Gilgamesh:

'Gilgamesh, you have come hither,

You have wearied yourself,

You have wearied yourself.

What gift shall I make to you

That you may return to your land?

Gilgamesh, I will disclose unto you

A hidden thing.

Yes, a secret of the gods will I tell unto you:

There is a plant,

Its thorn is like the buckthorn,

Its thorns will prick your hands

As does the rose

If that plant shall come to your hands

You will find new life'.

No sooner had Gilgamesh heard this

Than he opened the water-pipe (28)

He tied heavy stones on his feet in the manner of the pearl divers

They pulled him down into the deep

There he saw the plant.

He took the plant, though it pricked his hands.

He cut the heavy stones from his feet

The sea cast him up upon its shore

Gilgamesh says to him

Says to Urshanabi the Boatman:

'Urshanabi, this is the plant that is different from all others.

By its means a man can lay hold of the breath of life.

I shall take it to Uruk of the ramparts.



## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

I shall cause....

To eat the plant....

It shall be called Man Becomes Young in Old Age.

I myself shall eat it,

that I may return to the state of my youth.'

There I myself shall eat the plant that I may return to the state of my youth.'

After 20 intervals they broke off a morsel.

After 30 more rested for the night.

Gilgamesh saw a well whose water was cool

He descended into it to bathe in the water

A serpent smelled the fragrance of the plant

It darted up from the well and seized the plant:

Sloughing its skin in rejuvenation as it returned.

Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept.

His tears flowed down his cheeks.

He took the hand of Urshanabi, the Boatman:

'For whom have my hands labored, Urshanabi?

For whom has my heart's blood been spent?

I have not obtained any advantage for myself.

I have only obtained an advantage for the earth-lion (29)'.  
'

And now the tide will bear it twenty-double hours away!

When I opened the water-pipe

And... the gear

I noted the sign which was set for me

As a warning: I shall withdraw,

And leave the ship on the shore.'

After twenty intervals

They broke a morsel

And thirty more

Rested for the night (30)

When they arrived in Uruk of the ramparts

Gilgamesh says to him

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Says to Urshanabi the Boatman:

'Go up, Urshanabi, walk on the ramparts of Uruk (31)

See the foundation terrace

Touch, then, the masonry -

Is not this of burnt brick

And good? I say

The seven sages laid its foundation

One third is city. One third is orchards. One third is margin land.

There, there is the precinct of the temple of Inanna/Ishtar

These three parts

And the precinct

Comprise Uruk

(Written down according to its original and collated Palace of Ashurbanipal, King of the World, King of Assyria).

### **NOTES TO TABLET XI**

5. Ten gar is equal to 120 cubits and a cubit is thought to have been roughly half a meter in modern measurements. That means that the measurements of this original ark were a mere sixty meters on each side, which is approximately the size of a large house. Clearly there was no room inside such a small structure for the biblical two of every kind. It is mysterious what these measurements are intended to convey to us. Was there any actual cubical structure of these dimensions built somewhere? We do not know. It would be interesting to compare these measurements with the dimensions of temples excavated by archeologists. Sacred buildings may have attempted to emulate or reproduce these dimensions, and archeologists may well not have thought to look for such correspondences.

6. Geometrically, this indicates the construction of a cube from a central joint with a strut affixed to the centre of each of the six faces.

11. Divination by the entrails of sheep on a daily basis would be customary for such an enterprise as this among the Babylonians: the meat would afterwards be consumed. Knowledge of this would be taken for granted amongst all the poet/compliers' contemporaries, obviating any need for comment or explanation.

12. This passage is fragmentary. Two-thirds is preserved and is known not to refer to the entire ship because of a masculine pronominal suffix, whereas the noun for the boat is feminine. It must therefore refer to the floor. The meaning may be that the lower of the three horizontal strips of the floor corresponded to the southern sky band of Enki - below the equator.

13. Cyrus Gordon wryly observes that Ziusudra disregards Enki's advice to leave all his possessions behind.

21. Swallows were used in the ancient world as messenger birds, in the same way as were doves - or carrier-pigeons, as we call these specialized birds today. There is much evidence to suggest that messenger birds were used by the priests as well as by the long-distance navigators of antiquity. Pliny refers to the use of shore-sighting birds by navigators from Ceylon in Roman times. But far earlier nautical uses of shore sighting doves are recounted in his book *Prehistoric Crete* by R. W. Hutchinson,

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

who maintains that Sumerian sea captains must have been using them by the third millennium BC. Jason used them in his Argo voyage as well.

In ancient times there was a secret carrier-pigeon and carrier-swallow network connecting the oracle centers which enabled the priests to be in instant touch by bird telegraphy so that they could fake oracular prophecies by getting information in advance. The returning of the dove and of the swallow are esoteric references to this network, intended to be unintelligible to the uninitiated.

Similarly, an esoteric Egyptian pun is preserved in the use of the expression turned back as applied to Ziusudra's dove and swallow. Un in Egyptian means dovecote, but it also means to turn back. This pun thus referred to the doves from the un performing an un. Once again we see the trace of a sacred Egyptian pun lingering on in a language where it had ceased any longer to be a pun or have a double meaning.

24. Once again we have a tradition deriving from the Egyptians. The reference is to the non-phonetic Egyptian hieroglyph for 'time', which was a little round baked cake of bread. The bread cakes are thus visual/word puns expressing the passage of time.

25. The word ahu, which appears in the original text, should not be translated as 'shore'. Speiser and Heidel force that meaning on the word, whereas it really means rim, edge, surrounding region. Not many lines later, and again after that, the correct word for shore, kibru, occurs and recurs (see note 27 below), demonstrating by its proximity and constant use that ahu cannot have been intended in the sense of shore. Once more, the rim of the cosmic wheel by which Gilgamesh travelled to Ziusudra in the first place is referred to here (see also Tablet IX, note 1).

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

Note: The death of Gilgamesh, also sometimes called “Tablet XII” is only included as a tangential resource, it is not generally attached to the original eleven tablets, though it describes the death of Gilgamesh. It is reprinted from the *Penguin Classics* edition of the Epic.

### **The Death of Gilgamesh**

This too was the work of Gilgamesh, the king, who knew the countries of the world. He was wise, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went a long journey, was weary, worn out with labor, and returning engraved on a stone the whole story.

The destiny was fulfilled which the father of the gods, Enlil of the mountain, had decreed for Gilgamesh: ‘In nether-earth the darkness will show him a light; of mankind, all that are known, none will leave a monument for generations to come to compare with his. The heroes, the wise men, like the new moon have their waxing and waning. Men will say, “Who has ever rules with might and with power like him?” As in the dark month, the month of shadows, so without him there is no light. O Gilgamesh, this was the meaning of your dream. You were given the kingship, such was your destiny, everlasting life was not your destiny. Because of this do not be sad at heart, do not be grieved or oppressed; he has given you power to bind and to loose, to be the darkness and the light of mankind. He has given unexampled supremacy over the people, in victory in battle from which no fugitive returns, in forays and assaults from which there is no going back. But do not abuse this power, deal justly with your servants in the palace, deal justly before the face of the Sun.’

*The king has lain himself down and will not rise again,*

*The Lord of Mullah will not rise again;*

*He overcame evil, he will not come again;*

*Though he was strong of arm he will not rise again;*

*He had wisdom and a comely face, he will not come again;*

*He is gone into the mountain, he will not come again;*

*On the bed of fate he lies, he will not rise again,*

*From the couch of many colours he will not come again.*

## ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***

The people of the city, great and small, are not silent; they lift up the lament, all men of flesh and blood lift up the lament. Fate has spoken; like a hooked fish he lies stretched on a bed, like a gazelle that is caught in a noose. Inhuman Namtar is heavy upon him, Namtar that has neither hand nor foot, that drinks no water and eats no meat.

For Gilgamesh, son of Ninsun, they weighed out their offerings; his dear wife, his son, his concubine, his musicians, his jester, and all his household; his servants, his stewards, all who lived in the palace weighed out their offerings for Gilgamesh the son of Ninsun, the heart of Uruk. They weighed out their offerings to Ereshkigal, the Queen of Death, and to all the gods of the dead. To Namtar, who is fate, they weighed out the offering. Bread for Neti the Keeper of the Gate, bread for Ningizzida the god of the serpent, the lord of the Tree of Life; for Dumuzi also, the young shepherd, for Enki and Ninki, for Endukugga and Nindukugga, for Enmul and Ninmul, all the ancestral gods, forbears of Enlil. A feast for Shulpae the god of feasting. For Samuqan, god of the herds, for the mother Ninhursag, and the gods of creation in the place of creation, for the host of heaven, priest and priestess weighed out the offering for the dead. Gilgamesh, the son of Ninsun, lies in the tomb. At the place of offerings he weighed the bread offering, at the place of libation he poured out the wine. In those days the lord Gilgamesh departed, the son of Ninsun, the king, peerless, without and equal among men, who did not neglect Enlil his master. O Gilgamesh, lord of Kullab, great is thy praise.

