SCRIPTURE ANALYSIS · BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Ancient Stones, Part 1

Mesopotamian Myth, Lament & Wisdom

Translations, images and commentary for the artifacts on the Ancient Stones page

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Appendix A. Enūma eliš Tablet III: Complete Translation and Notes

About this study

This part covers the eight Mesopotamian literary objects on the Ancient Stones page of Scripture Analysis: the Sumerian King List, the Atra-ḫasīs Epic, Tablet XI of the Epic of Gilgamesh, Enūma eliš, Ludlul bēl nēmeqi, the Lament for Ur, the cylinder seal of the winged Ištar, and the Sumerian Flood Story (Eridu Genesis). Each entry gives a photograph of the object (or of the best-preserved manuscript), an identification table, an explanation in both technical and plain terms, a translation or key excerpts, notes where modern scholarship has corrected older readings, the main points of contact with the Hebrew Bible, and further reading.

About the translations. Translations quoted at length come from editions that are in the public domain in the United States (published before 1931), so they can be reproduced on the website. They are named in each entry. Because these older translations are often superseded, each is followed by notes giving the modern reading, summarized from the current critical editions. Short passages marked “translation by the author of this study” are fresh renderings made from the published Akkadian or Sumerian text. Long works and whole archives are represented by key excerpts and a summary, with links to complete modern translations.

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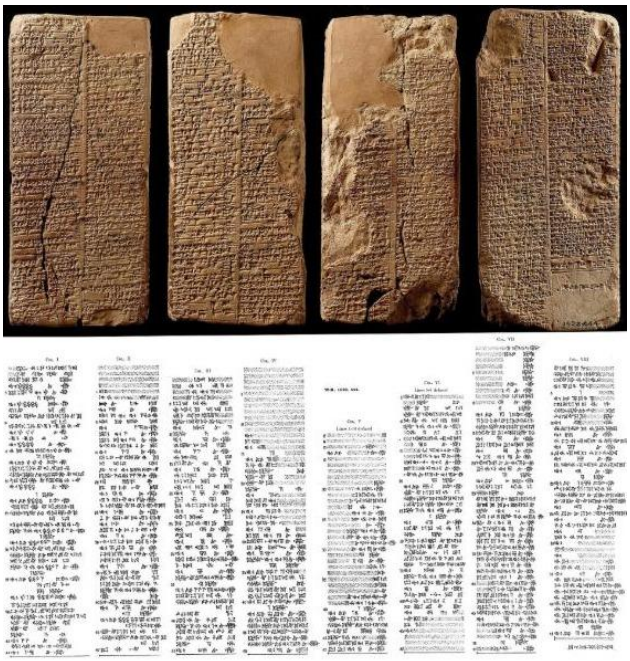
1. The Sumerian King List (Weld-Blundell Prism)



The Weld-Blundell Prism (WB 444) with S. H. Langdon's 1923 hand copy of its eight columns.

Image: Photograph: unknown; transcription: Stephen Herbert Langdon (1876–1937). Public domain. Source: Wikimedia Commons, file page.

Object	Four-sided clay prism, the most complete copy of the Sumerian King List
Museum	Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1923.444 ("WB 444")
Date	c. 1800 BC (its last entry is a king of the Isin dynasty, c. 1817 BC)
Provenance	Probably Larsa, southern Iraq; acquired by Herbert Weld-Blundell in 1922
Language / script	Sumerian, Old Babylonian cuneiform
Principal editions	Langdon, OECT 2 (1923); Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (1939); ETCSL 2.1.1 (online)

What it is

Technical summary. The Sumerian King List (SKL) is a chronographic composition known from about twenty manuscripts. WB 444 is the fullest. It presents southern Mesopotamia as a single kingdom whose "kingship" passes from city to city: it descends from heaven to Eridu, moves through five cities before a flood, and then moves among Kish, Uruk, Ur, Awan, Hamazi, Mari, Akshak, Akkad, the Gutians, Isin and others. The list places as consecutive several dynasties that in reality ruled at the same time, so it is political ideology as much as history. It was probably composed under the Ur III or early Isin kings to justify one-city hegemony. The antediluvian section (lines 1–39) is absent from some manuscripts and may be a secondary addition.

In plain terms. It is an official list of every king who, according to the scribes, had ever ruled Sumer, with how long each reigned. The earliest kings are given impossibly long reigns of tens of

thousands of years. Then “the flood swept over,” and reigns gradually shrink to normal human lengths.

The text: the kings before the Flood (complete)

The following is a line-by-line English rendering of the opening section of WB 444, prepared by the author of this study from the published Sumerian text. Royal names follow the ETCSL normalization.

1–3. After kingship had descended from heaven, the kingship was in Eridu.

4–5. In Eridu, Alulim became king; he ruled for 28,800 years.

6. Alalĝar ruled for 36,000 years.

7. Two kings; they ruled for 64,800 years.

8–10. Then Eridu fell, and the kingship was taken to Bad-tibira.

11. In Bad-tibira, En-men-lu-ana ruled for 43,200 years.

12. En-mel-gal-ana ruled for 28,800 years.

13. Dumuzid, the shepherd, ruled for 36,000 years.

14. Three kings; they ruled for 108,000 years.

15–17. Then Bad-tibira fell, and the kingship was taken to Larak.

18. In Larak, En-sipad-zid-ana ruled for 28,800 years.

19. One king; he ruled for 28,800 years.

20–22. Then Larak fell, and the kingship was taken to Sippar.

23. In Sippar, En-men-dur-ana became king; he ruled for 21,000 years.

24. One king; he ruled for 21,000 years.

25–27. Then Sippar fell, and the kingship was taken to Šuruppak.

28. In Šuruppak, Ubara-Tutu became king; he ruled for 18,600 years.

29. One king; he ruled for 18,600 years.

30–35. In five cities, eight kings; they ruled for 241,200 years.

36–39. Then the flood swept over. After the flood had swept over, and the kingship had descended from heaven, the kingship was in Kish.

Selected entries after the Flood

Dynasty	Entry in the list (summary)	Reign given
Kish I	Etana, “the shepherd, who ascended to heaven, who made firm all the foreign lands”	1,500 years
Kish I	En-men-barage-si, “who destroyed the weapons of Elam” (the first king also attested in contemporary inscriptions)	900 years
Kish I	Aga, son of En-men-barage-si (Gilgamesh’s opponent in the Sumerian tale *Gilgamesh and Aga*)	625 years

Dynasty	Entry in the list (summary)	Reign given
Uruk I	Enmerkar, “who built Uruk”	420 years
Uruk I	Lugalbanda, the shepherd	1,200 years
Uruk I	Gilgamesh, “whose father was a phantom, lord of Kullab”	126 years
Kish III	Ku-Baba, “a woman tavern-keeper, who made firm the foundations of Kish” (the only queen regnant in the list)	100 years
Akkad	Sargon, “whose father was a gardener, the cupbearer of Ur-Zababa”	56 years

Notes

- **The sexagesimal numbers.** The antediluvian reigns are round multiples of the Babylonian *šār* (3,600): 28,800 = 8 šār and 36,000 = 10 šār. They are symbolic, not chronological.
- **Ten kings in Berossus.** The later Babylonian priest Berossus (3rd century BC) preserves a version with ten kings before the flood, the last of whom (Xisouthros = Ziusudra) survives it. Some SKL manuscripts likewise end the list before the flood with Ziusudra of Šuruppak.
- **Older translations.** Barton (1916) translated a different, Nippur manuscript published by Poebel in 1914. His speculation that “Etana … to heaven” lies behind the name Enoch is not accepted today.

Points of contact with the Hebrew Bible

- **Genesis 5 and 11.** Both the SKL and Genesis divide early history into a long-lived pre-flood age and a post-flood age of shortening lifespans. Genesis 5 lists ten generations from Adam to Noah; the SKL lists eight (in some versions ten) kings, ending with the hero of the flood. The Genesis ages (hundreds of years) are far smaller than the SKL reigns (tens of thousands), and Genesis traces a family line rather than a succession of cities.
- **En-men-dur-ana and Enoch.** The seventh antediluvian king, En-men-dur-ana of Sippar, was remembered in later tradition as the man to whom the gods revealed divination. The parallel with Enoch, the seventh from Adam who “walked with God” (Gen 5:24), was argued by R. Borger and J. C. VanderKam; it is suggestive but debated.
- **Genre.** Comparative work by T. Jacobsen, W. W. Hallo and R. S. Hess treats the genealogies of Genesis as a distinct form, a lineage rather than a king list, using some of the same chronological conventions.

Further reading

- Jacobsen, Thorkild. *The Sumerian King List*. Assyriological Studies 11. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939 (free PDF from the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, University of Chicago).

- Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, “The Sumerian King List,” ETCSL 2.1.1. etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk
- Hess, Richard S. “The Genealogies of Genesis 1–11 and Comparative Literature.” *Biblica* 70 (1989): 241–254.
- Steinkeller, Piotr. *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017, ch. 1.

2. The Atra-ḫasīs Epic



A fragment of the Atra-ḫasīs flood myth in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Image: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Licence: CC0. Source: Wikimedia Commons, file page.

Object	Clay tablets (three-tablet poem); principal copy by the scribe Ipiq-Aya
Museum	Principal Old Babylonian copy (the Sippar tablets written by Ipiq-Aya) in the British Museum; further fragments in many collections
Date	Old Babylonian copy dated to the reign of Ammi-ṣaduqa (c. 1640 BC); composition probably c. 1800 BC; later Assyrian and Babylonian versions to the 7th century BC
Provenance	Sippar (Old Babylonian copy); Nineveh (Assyrian version)
Language / script	Akkadian (Old Babylonian dialect), cuneiform
Principal editions	Lambert & Millard, *Atra-ḫasīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (1969); Wasserman, *The Flood: The Akkadian Sources* (2020)

What it is

Technical summary. *Inūma ilū awīlum*, "When the gods were man," is a three-tablet epic of about 1,245 lines. It runs from the gods' labour, through the creation of humankind to take that labour over, to the threat humans pose by their "noise" (*rigmu*). The gods respond with plague, then drought and famine, and finally a flood. Each time Atra-ḫasīs ("Exceedingly Wise") is warned by the god Enki/Ea. Before the flood he is told to build a boat, and he survives. The poem ends with new limits placed on human fertility. It is the oldest substantial Mesopotamian flood narrative and the direct source of the flood story in Gilgamesh XI, which even calls its hero Atra-ḫasīs (XI 197).

In plain terms. This is the Babylonian "primeval history." The gods make people to do their work. People multiply and become too loud. The gods try to thin them out three times, and finally they send a flood. One wise man, tipped off by a friendly god, builds a boat and saves life.

Key excerpts

The opening lines (Tablet I 1–4). Translation by the author of this study from the Old Babylonian text (Lambert & Millard 1969):

1. When the gods were (like) man,
2. they bore the work, they carried the toil-basket.
3. The toil-basket of the great gods was large;
4. the work was heavy, the distress was great.

The famine (Assyrian version). Translation of R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (1912), pp. 115–116 (public domain):

> Above Adad diminished his rain,
> Below it was restrained, so that the stream rose not in the sources.
> The field diminished its produce …
> The wide plain bore salt;
> The plant came not forth, the lambs fattened not.
> Calamity was placed upon men,
> The womb was closed, no child came forth.
> When the fifth year came, the daughter looked for the entering of the mother,
> The mother opens not the door to her daughter …
> When the sixth year came, they prepared the daughter for a repast,
> They prepared the child for food; … one house devoured another.

Notes

- Rogers (1912) knew only fragments and called the poem "Ea and Atrakhasis." The complete order of the three tablets was established by Lambert and Millard in 1969, after the joins made by W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard among the British Museum fragments.
- **The creation of humankind (I 204–243).** The god We-ila (or Geštu-e), "who had intelligence," is slaughtered in the divine assembly. The birth-goddess Nintu mixes clay with his flesh and blood, and the Igigi gods spit upon the clay. Humankind therefore carries a divine "spirit" (*eṭemmu*), a wordplay on *ṭēmu*, "intelligence."
- **The "noise."** The meaning of the people's *rigmu* is debated. Older readings took it as rebellion or sin. Most scholars now see it as overpopulation (Kilmer 1972; Frymer-Kensky 1977), which explains the post-flood measures: barren women, stillbirth, and celibate priestesses.

Points of contact with the Hebrew Bible

- **Genesis 1–9 as a whole.** Atra-ḫasīs is the closest ancient parallel to the shape of Genesis 1–9: creation of humans, a crisis of human multiplication, a flood with a single survivor in a boat, and a new order afterward. Tikva Frymer-Kensky (*Biblical Archaeologist* 40, 1977) argued that Genesis reworks this same plot to new ends. In Genesis the flood answers moral corruption (Gen 6:5, 11–13) rather than noise, and the post-flood blessing commands fertility (Gen 9:1, 7) rather than restricting it.
- **Clay and divine life.** Humanity made from clay mixed with a divine element invites comparison with Gen 2:7, where the LORD God forms man from the dust and breathes into him the breath of life.

Further reading

- Lambert, W. G., and A. R. Millard. *Atra-ḫasīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1969 (reprinted Eisenbrauns, 1999).
- Wasserman, Nathan. *The Flood: The Akkadian Sources*. OBO 290. Leuven: Peeters, 2020 (open access).
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9.” *Biblical Archaeologist* 40 (1977): 147–155.
- Rogers, R. W. *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*. New York: Eaton & Mains, 1912. Internet Archive

3. The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet XI (“The Flood Tablet”)



The “Flood Tablet,” Tablet XI of the Standard Babylonian Gilgamesh epic, from Ashurbanipal’s library at Nineveh (British Museum K 3375).

Image: Wikimedia Commons contributor. Licence: CC0. Source: Wikimedia Commons, file page.

Object	Clay tablet, Tablet XI of the eleven-tablet Standard Babylonian epic (plus Tablet XII appendix)
Museum	British Museum, K 3375
Date	7th century BC copy; Standard Babylonian version attributed to Sîn-lēqi-unninni (c. 1200 BC); flood episode drawn from Atra-ḫasīs
Provenance	Library of Ashurbanipal, Nineveh (Kuyunjik)
Language / script	Akkadian (Standard Babylonian), Neo-Assyrian cuneiform
Principal editions	George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic* (2003); Smith, “The Chaldean Account of the Deluge” (1872)

What it is

Technical summary. In Tablet XI, Gilgameš reaches Ūta-napišti (Utnapishtim), the one man granted eternal life, and asks how he obtained it. Ūta-napišti narrates the flood (lines 8–206). It is a close adaptation of the Atra-ḫasīs account and is put in the first person. The tablet continues with Gilgameš’s failed test of staying awake for seven days, and with the plant of rejuvenation that a serpent steals. George Smith’s recognition of this tablet in 1872 began modern comparative study of Genesis.

In plain terms. This is the famous Babylonian "Noah" story. A god warns a man to build a boat and load it with his family and animals. A seven-day storm destroys humankind. The boat grounds on a mountain, and the survivor sends out birds and offers a sacrifice that the gods "smell."

Key excerpt: the flood narrative

Translation of R. Campbell Thompson, *The Epic of Gilgamish* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928), Tablet XI, in public domain. Thompson cast the epic in English hexameters. Words in parentheses are his additions; "…" marks gaps in the tablet or in the scan.

> Gilgamish unto him spake, to Uta-Napishtim the Distant: "Uta-Napishtim, upon thee I gaze, (yet) in no wise thy presence strange is, (for) thou art like me … O tell me, how couldst thou stand in th' Assemblage of Gods to petition for life (everlasting)?"
>
> Uta-Napishtim unto Gilgamish answer'd: "Gilgamish, I unto thee will discover the (whole) hidden story, aye, and the rede of the Gods will I tell thee.
>
> The City Shurippak — (O 'tis) a city thou knowest! — is set on the marge of Euphrates; old is this city, with gods in its midst. (Now), the great gods a deluge purposed to bring … Nin-igi-azag — 'tis Ea — (albeit) conspirator with them, unto a reed-hut their counsel betray'd he: 'O Reed-hut, O Reed-hut! Wall, wall! Hearken, O Reed-hut, consider, O Wall! O thou Mortal, thou of Shurippak, thou scion of Ubara-Tutu, a dwelling pull down, (and) fashion a vessel (therewith); abandon possessions, life do thou seek, (and) thy hoard disregard, and save life; every creature make to embark in the vessel. The vessel, which thou art to fashion, apt be its measure; its beam and its length be in due correspondence.' …
>
> All I possess'd I laded aboard her; the silver I laded, all I possess'd; gold, all I possess'd I laded aboard her, all I possess'd of the seed of all living I laded aboard her. Into the ship I embark'd all my kindred and family (with me), cattle (and) beasts of the field (and) all handicraftsmen embarking …
>
> (Then), when something of dawn had appear'd, from out the horizon rose a cloud darkling; (lo), Adad (the storm-god) was rumbling within it … desolation from Adad stretch'd to (high) Heaven, (and) all that was bright was turn'd into darkness …
>
> O, were stricken with terror the gods at the Deluge, fleeing, they rose to the Heaven of Anu, and crouch'd in the outskirts, cow'ring like curs were the gods, (while) like to a woman in travail Ishtar did cry … 'Sooth, then, am I to give birth unto (these) mine own people only to glut (with their bodies) the Sea as though they were fish-spawn?'
>
> Six days, a se'nnight the hurricane, deluge, (and) tempest continued sweeping the land: when the seventh day came, were quelléd the warfare, tempest (and) deluge which like to an army embattail'd were fighting. Lull'd was the sea, (all) spent was the gale, assuaged was the deluge … and all human back to (its) clay was return'd …
>
> Land was uprear'd at twelve (points), and the Ark on the Mountain of Nisir grounded; the Mountain of Nisir held fast, nor gave lease to her shifting …
>
> (Then), when the seventh day dawn'd, I put forth a dove, and released (her), (but) to and fro went the dove, and return'd (for) a resting-place was not. (Then) I a swallow put forth and released; to and fro went the swallow, she (too) return'd, (for) a resting-place was not; I put forth a raven, her, (too,) releasing; the raven went, too, and th' abating of waters saw; and she ate as she waded (and) splash'd, (unto me) not returning. Unto the four winds (of heaven) I freed (all the beasts), and an off'ring sacrificed, and a libation I pour'd on the peak of the mountain …

The gods smelt the savour, the gods the sweet savour smelt; (aye,) the gods did assemble like flies o'er him making the off'ring …

Whereat Ea answer'd and spake unto Enlil, the warrior, saying: 'O chieftain thou of the gods, thou warrior! How, forsooth, how (all) uncounsell'd couldst thou a deluge bring on? (Aye,) visit his sin on the sinner, visit his guilt on the guilty, (but) O, have mercy, that (thereby) he shall not be cut off …'

(Then) to the Ark came up Enlil; my hand did he grasp, and uplifted me, even me, and my wife, too, he raised … Blessing us: 'Uta-Napishtim hath hitherto only been mortal, now, indeed, Uta-Napishtim and (also) his wife shall be equal like to us gods; in the distance afar at the mouth of the rivers Uta-Napishtim shall dwell.'"

Notes on modern readings

- **Mount Nisir** is now read **Mount Niṣir** or **Nimuš** (George 2003). It is located in the Zagros, not at Ararat.
- **"Land was uprear'd at twelve (points)"**: the line is now understood as "at (a distance of) twelve [leagues] there emerged a region (of land)" (George 2003).
- **"Every creature"**: the Akkadian *zēr napšāti kalāma*, "the seed of all living creatures," is the same phrase used of the cargo in line 84.
- The boat is a cube of 10 × 10 × 10 rods (*nindanu*), about 60 m on each side, with six decks and seven storeys inside. Genesis's ark is a long box of 300 × 50 × 30 cubits (Gen 6:15).

Points of contact with the Hebrew Bible

Element	Gilgamesh XI	Genesis 6–9
Divine warning	Ea speaks to a reed wall	God speaks directly to Noah (6:13–21)
Vessel	Cube, six decks, sealed with bitumen	Box 300 × 50 × 30 cubits, three decks, covered with pitch (*kōper*)
Passengers	Family, craftsmen, animals, "seed of all living"	Noah's family and pairs (and sevens) of animals
Duration	Six days and seven nights of storm	40 days of rain; waters prevail 150 days
Landing	Mount Niṣir	Mountains of Ararat (8:4)
Birds	Dove, swallow, raven	Raven, then dove three times (8:6–12)
Sacrifice	Gods "smell the sweet savour" and gather "like flies"	The LORD smells the soothing aroma (8:21)
Outcome	Survivor and wife made immortal	Covenant with all flesh; rainbow sign (9:8–17)

Scholars across the spectrum accept that the two accounts are related. They differ on how. A. Heidel (*The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 1946) argued for a shared memory transmitted

independently. Most critical scholars hold that Genesis consciously reworks a Mesopotamian tradition in a monotheistic and moral frame.

Further reading

- George, Andrew R. *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Thompson, R. Campbell. *The Epic of Gilgamish*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1928. Internet Archive
- Heidel, Alexander. *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946.
- Tigay, Jeffrey H. *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.

4. Enūma eliš (The Babylonian Epic of Creation)



K.3473 + Rm.615 + 1879,0708.296, the principal Nineveh manuscript of Enūma eliš Tablet III, British Museum.
Image: Zunkir. Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0. Source: Wikimedia Commons, file page.

A note on the image used on the website. The picture currently shown for Enūma eliš on the Ancient Stones page (file "enuma-elish-3.gif") is not an Enūma eliš tablet. Its outline, colour and damage match the British Museum's **Nabonidus Chronicle (BM 35382)**, which appears in Part 2 of this study (under the Nabonidus Chronicle, where a photograph of it is reproduced). The image above shows the actual principal manuscript of Enūma eliš Tablet III.

Object	Seven clay tablets, c. 1,100 lines in all; known from well over a hundred manuscripts
Museum	Chiefly the British Museum (Nineveh and Babylonian copies); others from Aššur, Kish, Sultantepe and Uruk
Date	Composition probably 12th century BC (reign of Nebuchadnezzar I) or somewhat earlier; manuscripts 9th–2nd century BC
Provenance	Nineveh, Aššur, Babylon, Kish, Sippar, Sultantepe, Uruk
Language / script	Akkadian (Standard Babylonian), cuneiform
Principal editions	King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation* (1902); Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (2013); Heinrich et al., eBL edition (2021)

What it is

Technical summary. Enūma eliš ("When on high") is a hymn to Marduk in narrative form. Its centre is a theogony and a theomachy: the primeval waters Apsû (fresh) and Tiāmat (salt) beget the gods. Ea kills Apsû. Tiāmat raises an army of eleven monsters under Qingu. Marduk defeats her,

splits her body to make heaven and earth, organizes the cosmos, and creates humankind from Qingu's blood. The gods build Babylon and proclaim Marduk's fifty names. The poem was recited at the Babylonian New Year (*akītu*) festival.

In plain terms. It is Babylon's official account of how its god Marduk became king of the gods and made the world out of the body of the defeated sea-monster Tiamat.

The seven tablets at a glance

Tablet	Content
I	Theogony; Apsû's plot; Ea kills Apsû; birth of Marduk; Tiāmat creates eleven monsters and exalts Qingu
II	Ea and Anu fail to oppose Tiāmat; Marduk volunteers on condition of supreme authority
III	Anšar's envoy Kakka summons the gods; banquet; the gods decree Marduk's destiny
IV	Marduk enthroned; battle; Tiāmat split; heaven fashioned from half of her
V	Ordering of stars, moon and calendar; earth formed from Tiāmat's body (Tigris and Euphrates from her eyes)
VI	Humankind created from Qingu's blood to serve the gods; Babylon and Esagil built; first fifty names
VII	Remaining names of Marduk; epilogue commending the poem to be taught

Key excerpts

Translation of L. W. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation* (London: Luzac, 1902), public domain.

Tablet I 1–10: the beginning

1. When in the height heaven was not named,
2. And the earth beneath did not yet bear a name,
3. And the primeval Apsû, who begat them,
4. And chaos, Tiamat, the mother of them both,—
5. Their waters were mingled together,
6. And no field was formed, no marsh was to be seen;
7. When of the gods none had been called into being,
8. And none bore a name, and no destinies [were ordained];
9. Then were created the gods in the midst of [heaven],
10. Lahmu and Lahamu were called into being [...].

Tablet IV 93–104 and 135–140: the battle and the making of heaven

93. Then advanced Tiamat and Marduk, the counsellor of the gods;
94. To the fight they came on, to the battle they drew nigh.
95. The lord spread out his net and caught her,

96. And the evil wind that was behind (him) he let loose in her face.
97. As Tiamat opened her mouth to its full extent,
98. He drove in the evil wind, while as yet she had not shut her lips.
99. The terrible winds filled her belly,
100. And her courage was taken from her, and her mouth she opened wide.
101. He seized the spear and burst her belly,
102. He severed her inward parts, he pierced (her) heart.
103. He overcame her and cut off her life;
104. He cast down her body and stood upon it.
…
135. Then the lord rested, gazing upon her dead body,
136. While he divided the flesh of the ..., and devised a cunning plan.
137. He split her up like a flat fish into two halves;
138. One half of her he stablished as a covering for heaven.
139. He fixed a bolt, he stationed a watchman,
140. And bade them not to let her waters come forth.

Tablet VI 1–8: the decision to create humankind

1. When Marduk heard the word of the gods,
2. His heart prompted him and he devised [a cunning plan].
3. He opened his mouth and unto Ea [he spake],
4. [That which] he had conceived in his heart he imparted [unto him]:
5. “My blood will I take and bone will I [fashion],
6. “I will make man, that man may ... [...].
7. “I will create man who shall inhabit [the earth],”
8. “That the service of the gods may be established, and that [their] shrines [may be built].”

> The complete text of Tablet III, with a manuscript study and line-by-line notes, is given in **Appendix A** at the end of this part.

Notes on modern readings

- **I 4.** King’s “chaos, Tiamat” reads *mummu Tiāmat*. Modern editors take *mummu* as an epithet, “Tiāmat the creatrix” (Lambert) or “matrix,” not “chaos.”
- **I 10.** Laḫmu and Laḫāmu are the first divine pair. They are not “created in the midst of heaven”; they are born “within” the mingled waters (*ina qerbišun*).
- **IV 137.** King’s “flat fish” renders *nūnu mašṭê*, “a fish for drying.” Marduk splits Tiāmat like a fish being prepared for drying.

- **VI 5.** The modern reading is "Blood I will mass and cause bones to be" (*dāmī lukṣur-ma eṣemta lušabši*). It is not Marduk's own blood. Lines 31–33, unknown to King, specify that humankind is made from the blood of the executed Qingu.

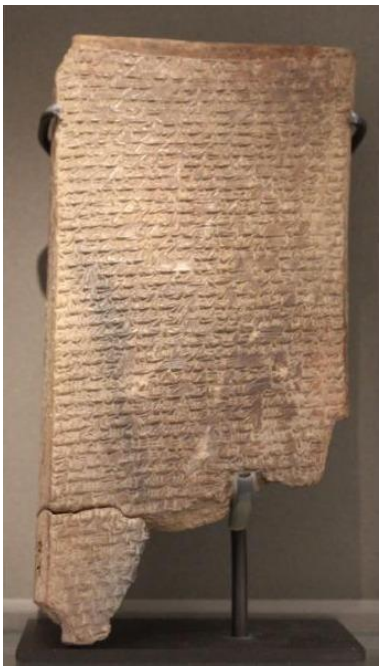
Points of contact with the Hebrew Bible

- **Tiāmat and tĕhôm.** Hebrew *tĕhôm*, "the deep" (Gen 1:2), and Akkadian *tiāmtu*, "sea," are cognates. A. Heidel (*The Babylonian Genesis*, 1951) and D. T. Tsumura (*Creation and Destruction*, 2005) argued that *tĕhôm* is not borrowed from Tiāmat and is not personified in Genesis.
- **Separation of waters.** Marduk halves Tiāmat to set waters above and below a barrier (IV 137–140). Genesis 1:6–8 has God separate the waters above and below an expanse (*rāqîaʿ*). The parallel is widely noted. The contrast, creation by word with no combat, is equally emphasized.
- **The Chaoskampf debate.** H. Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos* (1895) traced biblical imagery of God defeating the sea and its monsters (Ps 74:13–14; 89:9–10; Isa 51:9; Job 26:12–13) to Enūma eliš. Most scholars now see the nearer background in West Semitic (Ugaritic) Baal–Yamm traditions (see Part 3, The Ugaritic Tablets).

Further reading

- Lambert, W. G. *Babylonian Creation Myths*. Mesopotamian Civilizations 16. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013.
- Heinrich, A. C., et al. "Poem of Creation (Enūma eliš)." Translated by B. R. Foster. *electronic Babylonian Library*, 2021. ebl.lmu.de
- King, L. W. *The Seven Tablets of Creation*. London: Luzac, 1902. sacred-texts.com
- Heidel, Alexander. *The Babylonian Genesis*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- Tsumura, David T. *Creation and Destruction*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005.

5. Ludlul bēl nēmeqi (“I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom”)



A Neo-Assyrian tablet of Ludlul bēl nēmeqi from Nineveh (7th century BC).
Image: Zunkir. Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0. Source: Wikimedia Commons, file page.

Object	Poem in four (some argue five) tablets, c. 480 lines
Museum	Principal manuscripts in the British Museum (Nineveh), with others from Aššur, Sultantepe, Babylon and Sippar
Date	Composed in the Kassite period (c. 1300–1100 BC); manuscripts 8th–2nd century BC
Provenance	Nineveh (Library of Ashurbanipal) and other sites
Language / script	Akkadian (Standard Babylonian), cuneiform
Principal editions	Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (1960); Annus & Lenzi, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* (SAACT 7, 2010); Oshima, *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers* (2014)

What it is

Technical summary. Ludlul is a first-person thanksgiving poem by Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, a Kassite-period official, who praises Marduk for having first afflicted and then restored him. Tablet I describes his abandonment by god and king and his loss of social standing. Tablet II catalogues his illness and the failure of every ritual expert. Tablet III recounts dreams in which Marduk’s envoys announce his healing. Tablet IV (V in some editions) describes his restoration and procession through the gates of Esagil.

In plain terms. A good and pious man falls from favour, loses his health and friends, and cannot understand why the gods are against him. Then his god heals him, and he writes this poem in praise.

Key excerpts

Translation of G. A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1916), pp. 392–395 (public domain). Barton translated Tablet II and part of Tablet III, the portions then known.

Tablet II: the sufferer's piety and bewilderment

I advanced in life, I attained to the allotted span;
Wherever I turned there was evil, evil —
Oppression is increased, uprightness I see not.
I cried unto god, but he showed not his face.
I prayed to my goddess, but she raised not her head …
But I myself thought of prayers and supplications;
Prayer was my wisdom, sacrifice, my dignity …
For I knew that with god these things are in favor.
What is innocent of itself, to god is evil!
What in one's heart is contemptible, to one's god is good!
Who can understand the thoughts of the gods in heaven?
The counsel of god is full of destruction; who can understand?
Where may human beings learn the ways of god?
He who lives at evening is dead in the morning …
In prosperity they speak of climbing to Heaven;
Trouble overtakes them and they speak of going down to Sheol.

Tablet II, reverse: the illness

My sickness baffled the conjurers,
And the seer left dark my omens.
The diviner has not improved the condition of my sickness …
The god helped me not, my hand he took not;
The goddess pitied me not, she came not to my side;
The coffin yawned; they [the heirs] took my possessions;
While I was not yet dead, the death wail was ready.

Tablet III: the healing

My ears, which were stopped, were deaf as a deaf man's —
He removed their deafness and restored their hearing …
The tongue, which had stiffened so that it could not be raised —
[He relieved] its thickness, so its words could be understood.

Notes on modern readings

- **The sufferer's name.** Barton calls him "Tabu-utul-Bel" of Nippur. The name is now read **Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan**, a Kassite official also attested in documents of Nazi-Maruttaš (c. 1307–1282 BC).
- **Order of tablets.** Barton's "Second Tablet" is the modern Tablet II. The poem's opening hymn to Marduk (Tablet I 1–40), which shows from the outset that the sufferer's ordeal ends in praise, was recovered only in the 1990s and 2000s.
- **II 36–38.** Barton's rendering of the famous lines on the inscrutability of the gods is close to modern translations (Lambert: "Who knows the will of the gods in heaven? Who understands the plans of the underworld gods?").

Points of contact with the Hebrew Bible

- **Job.** Ludlul has been called "the Babylonian Job" since the 19th century. Both feature a pious sufferer, failed consultations, social abandonment, physical torment, and restoration. The differences are as significant as the likenesses. Ludlul is a thanksgiving hymn whose question is answered by healing. Job is a dialogue that interrogates divine justice itself, and its answer (Job 38–41) is not a cure but a theophany.
- **The psalms of thanksgiving.** The pattern of distress, plea and deliverance recounted in praise is that of the individual thanksgiving psalms (e.g., Ps 30; 116).

Further reading

- Lambert, W. G. *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960.
- Annus, Amar, and Alan Lenzi. *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi: The Standard Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer*. SAACT 7. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2010.
- Oshima, Takayoshi. *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers*. ORA 14. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Barton, G. A. *Archaeology and the Bible*. Philadelphia, 1916. Internet Archive

6. The Lament for Ur



Tablet with a lament over the ruin of Ur, Louvre AO 6446.
Image: Rama. Licence: CC BY-SA 3.0 FR. Source: Wikimedia Commons, file page.

Object	Sumerian poem of 436 lines in eleven sections (*kirugu*); known from about 20 Old Babylonian tablets
Museum	Manuscripts in the Penn Museum (Nippur), British Museum, Louvre and elsewhere
Date	Composed soon after the fall of Ur in 2004 BC; copies c. 1800 BC
Provenance	Nippur, Ur and other Old Babylonian school sites
Language / script	Sumerian, Old Babylonian cuneiform
Principal editions	Kramer, *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur* (AS 12, 1940); ETCSL 2.2.2

What it is

Technical summary. The Lament for Ur belongs to the Sumerian city-lament genre, alongside the Lament for Sumer and Ur, the Nippur Lament, the Eridu Lament and the Uruk Lament. It mourns the destruction of Ur by the Elamites and the people of Šimaški at the end of the Third Dynasty of Ur. The city goddess Ningal pleads before the divine assembly, An and Enlil decree the destruction regardless, and the city is overwhelmed by a divine "storm" (*u₄*). The poem closes with a prayer for restoration. The city laments were probably composed for rituals at the rebuilding of temples under the Isin dynasty.

In plain terms. It is a long funeral song for a city. Ur's patron goddess watches her city being destroyed, begs the high gods to stop it, fails, and weeps over the ruins.

Content summary

No public-domain English translation exists, so the poem is summarized here in the author's own words. A complete modern translation is freely available from the ETCSL (link below).

- **Songs 1–2.** A litany of the gods who have "abandoned" their sheepfolds: Enlil leaves Nippur, Ningal leaves Ur, and so through the cities of Sumer. The refrain calls on the city to raise a bitter lament.
- **Songs 3–5.** Ningal tells how she foresaw the "storm," wept before An and Enlil, and was refused. The decree was unalterable.
- **Songs 6–7.** The storm is described as a cosmic flood. Corpses lie in the streets and gates, "like fat in the sun," and the dead fill the city's broad ways.
- **Songs 8–10.** Ningal weeps for her ruined house and asks how long she must mourn. The poet addresses her in sympathy.
- **Song 11.** A prayer to Nanna, the city's god, that the destruction not recur and that the people may again bring him offerings.

Points of contact with the Hebrew Bible

- **Lamentations.** F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp (*Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 1993) identified a shared city-lament genre. Its features include divine abandonment, the destruction decreed by the deity, the city personified as a weeping woman, the reversal of festival into mourning, and a closing appeal for restoration. Lamentations shares all of these (e.g., Lam 1:1–2, 16; 2:1–9; 5:19–22). Direct dependence is not claimed; the comparison is of genre.
- **Divine abandonment.** The motif of a god leaving his temple before its fall also appears in Ezekiel's vision of the glory departing from Jerusalem (Ezek 10:18–19; 11:22–23).

Further reading

- Kramer, S. N. *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*. Assyriological Studies 12. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940 (free PDF from the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, University of Chicago).
- ETCSL 2.2.2, "The Lament for Urim." etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk
- Dobbs-Allsopp, F. W. *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993.
- Michalowski, Piotr. *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989.

7. Cylinder Seal Impression of the Winged Ištar



Modern impression of an Akkadian-period cylinder seal: the winged, armed Ištar (Inanna) with one foot on a lion, facing her minister Ninšubur. A star (the planet Venus) appears above.

Image: Photograph of an Akkadian-period seal impression. Public domain. Source: Wikimedia Commons, file page.

Object	Cylinder seal (shown as a modern impression rolled in clay)
Museum	Usually identified as the Oriental Institute (now ISAC) Museum, Chicago, A27903
Date	Akkadian period, c. 2334–2154 BC
Provenance	Southern Mesopotamia (purchased)
Language / script	No inscription visible on this impression
Principal discussion	Collon, *First Impressions* (1987); Black & Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (1992)

What it is

Technical summary. The seal shows Ištar (Sumerian Inanna) in her martial aspect. She is winged, wears a horned crown (the mark of divinity), and has weapons, maces and possibly scimitars, rising from her shoulders. She holds a lion by a leash and rests her foot on its back; the lion was her attribute animal. The figure before her, with raised hand, is her vizier (*sukkal*) Ninšubur. The eight-pointed star is her astral symbol as the planet Venus. Akkadian-period glyptic was the first to depict gods in narrative scenes, and this seal is a classic example.

In plain terms. A cylinder seal was a small carved stone rolled across wet clay to “sign” documents. This one shows the goddess Ishtar as a warrior, with wings and weapons and her lion, being approached by her servant.

Points of contact with the Hebrew Bible

- **"The queen of heaven."** Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:17–19, 25 condemn the worship of "the queen of heaven" (*malkat haššāmayim*), with cakes, libations and incense, by the people of Judah before and after 586 BC. Most commentators identify her with Ištar (or a West Semitic counterpart, Astarte or ʿAnat). Ištar's titles include "queen of heaven" (Akkadian *šarrat šamê*; Sumerian *nin-an-na*).
- **Astral worship.** The star symbol bears on biblical condemnations of worship of "the host of heaven" (Deut 4:19; 2 Kgs 23:4–5; Zeph 1:5).

Further reading

- Collon, Dominique. *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East*. London: British Museum Press, 1987.
- Black, Jeremy, and Anthony Green. *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*. London: British Museum Press, 1992.
- Ackerman, Susan. "'And the Women Knead Dough': The Worship of the Queen of Heaven in Sixth-Century Judah." In *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. P. L. Day, 109–124. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.

8. The Eridu Genesis (The Sumerian Flood Story)



The Sumerian Flood Story ("Eridu Genesis"), Penn Museum CBS 10673, from Nippur.
Image: Onceinawhile. Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0. Source: Wikimedia Commons, file page.

Object	Clay tablet, three columns on each side; only about one-third of the text survives
Museum	Penn Museum, Philadelphia, CBS 10673
Date	c. 1600 BC (Old Babylonian copy); composition probably early second millennium BC
Provenance	Nippur, Iraq
Language / script	Sumerian, cuneiform
Principal editions	Poebel, *Historical Texts* (1914); Jacobsen, "The Eridu Genesis," *JBL* 100 (1981); Civil in Lambert & Millard, *Atra-ḫasīs* (1969); ETCSL 1.7.4

What it is

Technical summary. The tablet preserves a Sumerian primeval history in which the gods create humankind and animals, kingship descends from heaven, the first five cities are founded (Eridu, Bad-tibira, Larak, Sippar, Šuruppak), and the gods decide to send a flood. The pious king Ziusudra ("life of long days") is warned by Enki through a wall, rides out a seven-day storm in a great boat, sacrifices to the sun-god Utu on emerging, and is granted eternal life and settled in Dilmun. Thorkild Jacobsen named the composition "Eridu Genesis" because its sequence of creation, antediluvian cities and flood parallels Genesis 1–9.

In plain terms. This is the oldest known written flood story, in Sumerian. A king named Ziusudra is warned by a god, survives a seven-day flood in a boat, and is rewarded with eternal life.

Key excerpt: the creation of humankind (column I)

Translation of G. A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible* (1916), p. 278, from Poebel's edition, public domain.

> "My human-kind from its destruction I will [raise up];
> With the aid of Nintu my creation … I will raise up;
> The people in their settlements I will establish;
> The city, wherever man creates one — indeed its protection — therein I will give him rest …"
> After Anu, Enlil, Enki, and Ninkharsag
> The black-headed race had created,
> All that is from the earth, from the earth they caused to spring,
> Cattle and beasts of the field suitably they brought into being.

Points of contact with the Hebrew Bible

- **Genesis 1–9.** The sequence of creation of humans and animals, the founding of the first cities, and the flood with a single righteous survivor is the same as the outline of Genesis 1–9. Jacobsen (1981) argued that both texts share a "chronographic" frame in which history begins with creation and is divided by the flood.
- **The righteous survivor.** Ziusudra, like Noah, is singled out for his piety (Gen 6:9), and he offers sacrifice after leaving the boat (Gen 8:20). Unlike Noah, he becomes immortal. Ziusudra is the Sumerian counterpart of Akkadian Atra-ḫasīs and Ūta-napišti, and of Berossus's Xisouthros.

Further reading

- Jacobsen, Thorkild. "The Eridu Genesis." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): 513–529.
- ETCSL 1.7.4, "The Flood Story." etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk
- Day, John. *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1–11*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Appendix A. Enūma eliš Tablet III: Complete Translation and Notes

This appendix gives the complete text of Enūma eliš Tablet III (138 lines) in the public-domain translation of L. W. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation* (London: Luzac, 1902), with notes on the modern readings of W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (2013), and the electronic Babylonian Library edition by A. C. Heinrich et al. (2021, translated by B. R. Foster). The principal manuscript, K.3473 + Rm.615 + 1879,0708.296 from Nineveh, is shown in the Enūma eliš entry above. Full-resolution photographs are available from the eBL record.

Square brackets [ ] mark text restored by King where the tablets were broken; parentheses ( ) mark words added for sense; an ellipsis (…) marks a gap. Section headings are editorial.

Lines 1ff. — Anšar commissions his vizier

1. Anshar opened his mouth, and
2. [Unto Gaga], his [minister], spake the word:
3. "[O Gaga, thou minis]ter that rejoicest my spirit,
4. "[Unto Lahmu and Lah]amu will I send thee.
5. "[…] thou canst attain,
6. "[…] thou shalt cause to be brought before thee.
7. "[… let] the gods, all of them,
8. "[Make ready for a feast], at a banquet let them sit,
9. "[Let them eat bread], let them mix wine,
10. "[That for Marduk], their avenger, they may decree the fate.
11. "[Go,] Gaga, stand before them,
12. "[And all that] I tell thee, repeat unto them, (and say):

Lines 13ff. — Anšar's message (first statement)

13. "[Anshar], your son, hath sent me,
14. "[The purpose] of his heart he hath made known unto me.
15. "[He saith that Tia]mat our mother hath conceived a hatred for us,
16. "[With all] her force she rageth, full of wrath.
17. "All the gods have turned to her,
18. "With those, whom ye created, they go at her side.
19. "They are banded together, and at the side of Tiamat they advance;
20. "They are furious, they devise mischief without resting night and day.
21. "They prepare for battle, fuming and raging;
22. "They have joined their forces and are making war.
23. "Ummu-Hubur, who formed all things,
24. "Hath made in addition weapons invincible, she hath spawned monster-serpents,
25. "Sharp of tooth and merciless of fang.
26. "With poison instead of blood she hath filled their bodies.
27. "Fierce monster-vipers she hath clothed with terror,
28. "With splendour she hath decked them, she hath made them of lofty stature.
29. "Whoever beholdeth them, terror overcometh him,
30. "Their bodies rear up and none can withstand their attack.

"She hath set up vipers, and dragons, and the (monster) Lahamu,
"And hurricanes, and raging hounds, and scorpion-men,
"And mighty tempests, and fish-men, and rams;
"They bear merciless weapons, without fear of the fight.
"Her commands are mighty, none can resist them;
"After this fashion, huge of stature, hath she made eleven (monsters).
"Among the gods who are her sons, inasmuch as he hath given her [support],
"She hath exalted Kingu; in their midst she hath raised [him] to power.
"To march before the forces, [to lead the host],
"[To] give the battle-signal, to advance [to the attack],
"[To direct] the battle, to control the [fight],
"Unto him [hath she entrusted; in costly raiment] she hath made him sit, (saying):
"'[I have] uttered thy spell, in the assembly of the gods [I have raised thee to power],
"'[The] dominion over all the gods [have I entrusted unto thee].
"'[Be] thou exalted, [thou] my chosen spouse,
"'May they magnify thy name over all of [them … the Anunnaki].'
"She hath given him the Tablets of Destiny, on his breast she laid them, (saying):
"'Thy command shall not be without avail, and the word of [thy] mouth shall be established.'
"Now Kingu, (thus) exalted, having received [the power of Anu],
"Decreed the fate for the gods, her sons, (saying):
"'Let the opening of your mouth quench the Fire-god;
"'Whoso is exalted in the battle, let him display (his) might!'
"I sent Anu, but he could not withstand her;
"Nudimmud was afraid and turned back.
"But Marduk hath set out, the director of the gods, your son;
"To set out against Tiamat his heart hath prompted (him).
"He opened his mouth and spake unto me, (saying):
"'If I, your avenger,
"'Conquer Tiamat and give you life,
"'Appoint an assembly, make my fate preeminent and proclaim it.
"'In Upshukkinaku seat yourselves joyfully together;
"'With my word in place of you will I decree fate.
"'May whatsoever I do remain unaltered,
"'May the word of my lips never be changed nor made of no avail.'
"Hasten, therefore, and swiftly decree for him the fate which you bestow,
"That he may go and fight your strong enemy!"

Lines 67ff. — Kakka travels to Laḫmu and Laḫāmu

Gaga went, he took his way and
Humbly before Lahmu and Lahamu, the gods, his fathers,
He made obeisance, and he kissed the ground at their feet.
He humbled himself; then he stood up and spake unto them, (saying):

Lines 71ff. — The message delivered (verbatim repetition)

"Anshar, your son, hath sent me,
"The purpose of his heart he hath made known unto me.

"He saith that Tiamat our mother hath conceived a hatred for us,
"With all her force she rageth, full of wrath.
"All the gods have turned to her,
"With those, whom ye created, they go at her side.
"They are banded together and at the side of Tiamat they advance;
"They are furious, they devise mischief without resting night and day.
"They prepare for battle, fuming and raging;
"They have joined their forces and are making war.
"Ummu-Hubur, who formed all things,
"Hath made in addition weapons invincible, she hath spawned monster-serpents,
"Sharp of tooth and merciless of fang.
"With poison instead of blood she hath filled their bodies.
"Fierce monster-vipers she hath clothed with terror,
"With splendour she hath decked them, she hath made them of lofty stature.
"Whoever beholdeth them, terror overcometh him,
"Their bodies rear up and none can withstand their attack.
"She hath set up vipers, and dragons, and the (monster) Lahamu,
"And hurricanes, and raging hounds, and scorpion-men,
"And mighty tempests, and fish-men, and [rams];
"They bear merciless weapons, without fear of the fight.
"Her commands are mighty, none can resist them;
"After this fashion, huge of stature, hath she made eleven (monsters).
"Among the gods who are her sons, inasmuch as he hath given her support,
"She hath exalted Kingu; in their midst she hath raised him to power.
"To march before the forces, to lead the host,
"To give the battle-signal, to advance to the attack,
"To direct the battle, to control the fight,
"Unto him hath she entrusted; in costly raiment she hath made him sit, (saying):
"'I have uttered thy spell, in the assembly of the gods I have raised thee to power,
"'The dominion over all the gods have I entrusted unto thee.
"'Be thou exalted, thou my chosen spouse,
"'May they magnify thy name over all of them … the Anunna[ki].'
"She hath given him the Tablets of Destiny, on [his] breast [she laid them], (saying):
"'Thy command shall not be without avail, [and the word of thy mouth shall be established].'
"Now Kingu, (thus) exalted, [having received the power of Anu],
"[Decreed the fate] for the gods, her sons, (saying):
"'Let the opening of your mouth [quench] the Fire-god;
"'Whoso is exalted in the battle, [let him display] (his) might!'
"I sent Anu, but he could not [withstand her];
"Nudimmud was afraid and [turned back].
"But Marduk hath set out, the director of the [gods, your son];
"To set out against Tiamat [his heart hath prompted (him)].
"He opened his mouth [and spake unto me], (saying):
"'If I, [your avenger],
"'Conquer Tiamat and [give you life],

"'Appoint an assembly, [make my fate preeminent and proclaim it].
"'In Upshukkinaku [seat yourselves joyfully together];
"'With my word in place of [you will I decree fate].
"'May whatsoever [I] do remain unaltered,
"'May the word of [my lips] never be changed nor made of no avail.'
"Hasten, therefore, and swiftly [decree for him] the fate which you bestow,
"That he may go and fight your strong enemy!"

Lines 125ff. — The gods' reaction

Lahmu and Lahamu heard and cried aloud,
All of the Igigi wailed bitterly, (saying):
"What has been altered so that they should … […]
"We do not understand the d[eed] of Tiamat!"

Lines 129ff. — The assembly, the banquet, and the decree for Marduk

Then did they collect and go,
The great gods, all of them, who decree [fate].
They entered in before Anshar, they filled […];
They kissed one another, in the assembly […].
They made ready for the feast, at the banquet [they sat];
They ate bread, they mixed [sesame-wine].
The sweet drink, the mead, confused their […],
They were drunk with drinking, their bodies were filled.
They were wholly at ease, their spirit was exalted;
Then for Marduk, their avenger, did they decree the fate.

Notes on modern readings (Tablet III)

Line(s)	Note
2, 11, 67	King read the vizier's name as "Gaga." Modern editions (Lambert 2013; eBL 2021) read it as Kakka (Akk. kaka), Anšar's sukkallu (vizier, chief minister).
4, 68, 125	Laḫmu and Laḫāmu are the first divine pair born from Apsû and Tiāmat (Tablet I.10), so they are Anšar's own ancestors. This is why Anšar sends a formal envoy rather than summoning them.
8–9, 133–134	The feast formula. In the Akkadian, the gods eat ašnan (the grain-goddess's name, used for cereal produce) and drink kurunnu, a high-grade beer or wine. King's "sesame-wine" in line 134 is an outdated rendering.
15–52 = 73–110	Tiāmat's preparations. The same block appears in Tablet I, again in Tablet II, and twice here (once as Anšar dictates it and once as Kakka repeats it). Verbatim repetition like this is a normal feature of Akkadian epic messenger scenes (compare the Atra-ḫasīs and Gilgameš epics).
23, 81	Ummu-Ḫubur, "Mother Ḫubur," is an epithet of Tiāmat as the one who "forms everything." Ḫubur is also a name for the river of the netherworld.

Line(s)	Note
24–33	The eleven creatures. In Akkadian they are: mušmaḫḫū (monster-serpents, l. 24); ušumgallū (great dragons, l. 27); bašmu (horned viper); mušḫuššu (the "furious snake," the dragon on Babylon's Ištar Gate); laḫmu (the "hairy one," a protective hero-figure, not the god Laḫmu as King thought); ugallu (lion-demon); uridimmu ("mad lion/dog"; King's "raging hounds"); girtablullû (scorpion-man); ūmū dabrūtu (fierce storm-demons; King's "mighty tempests"); kulullû (fish-man); and kusarikku (bull-man or bison; King's "rams" is now abandoned). That is eleven, matching l. 36.
36, 94	ištēn-ešret, "eleven," the canonical number of Tiāmat's brood. Marduk later captures them and sets up their images (Tablet V).
38, 96	King's "Kingu" is now normalized Qingu. He becomes Tiāmat's consort and commander. In Tablet VI his blood is used to create humankind.
47, 105	ṭuppi šīmāti, "the Tablet of Destinies," is singular in Akkadian; King's plural "Tablets" reflects older usage. Holding it gives the right to decree fate. Marduk seizes it from Qingu in Tablet IV.
49, 107	King's "the power of Anu" translates ānūtu, literally "Anu-ship," that is, supreme divine authority. Modern translators render it as supremacy or sovereignty.
51–52, 109–110	These are Qingu's decrees to his troops. Line 51 (epšu pīkunu girra liniḫḫa) means roughly "let your utterance quell fire (Girra)": their command will be strong enough to put out the fire-god. King's line 52 is a guess at a damaged text. The modern reading (imtuk kitmuru magšara lišrabbib) has Qingu promise that their massed venom will force the mighty one to yield. Some manuscripts read ina kitmuri.
53–54, 111–112	This refers back to Tablet II, where Anu and Nudimmud (= Ea/Enki) were each sent against Tiāmat and turned back.
55, 113	apkal ilī, "sage of the gods" (King: "director"). Apkallu is the term for the antediluvian sages of Mesopotamian tradition.
58, 116	mutīr gimilli, literally "the one who returns the favor," i.e. avenger or champion. The same title for Marduk closes the tablet (l. 138).
60–64, 118–122	Marduk's conditions. He asks the assembly to name his destiny supreme and to let him decree fate in their place, with his word never to be revoked. This is the political heart of the poem, and the gods grant it in Tablet IV.
61, 119	Ubšukkinakku (King: "Upshukkinaku") is the gods' assembly hall.
126	The Igigi here are the great gods of heaven as a body.
127–128	King could not read l. 127. Modern editions take both lines as the gods' dismay: they ask what has turned hostile, that she has acted against them, and say they cannot understand what Tiāmat is doing.
131	Modern editions restore ḫidûta, "joy": the gods are filled with joy on entering before Anšar.
135–136	arsu matqu is a sweet beer-mash or porridge, and šikru is beer. King's "mead" is anachronistic. The gods grow pleasantly drunk.
137–138	The gods are carefree (egû) and their spirits rise. In that mood they decree the destiny of Marduk, which is formally carried out at the start of Tablet IV.