

SOVEREIGN INTELLIGENCE SYSTEMS

The Epic of Gilgamesh

*The oldest surviving great work of literature. A Seventy-One
Edition, re-rendered from the Standard Babylonian and Old
Babylonian tablets.*

The oldest surviving great work of literature. A Seventy-One Edition, re-rendered
from the Standard Babylonian and Old Babylonian tablets.

Ancient Mesopotamia · translated by The Seventy-One Press

18 chapters · 18,628 words · 2026

<https://sovereignintelligence.systems/works/the-epic-of-gilgamesh>

CONTENTS

01	The Pennsylvania Tablet	5 min
02	Tablet I — The Coming of Enkidu	2 min
03	Tablet II — The Taming of Enkidu	8 min
04	The Yale Tablet	6 min
05	Tablet II — The Meeting of Gilgamesh and Enkidu	5 min
06	Tablet III — The Forest Journey	2 min
07	Tablet IV — The Cedar Forest	8 min
08	Tablet V — The Battle with Humbaba	1 min
09	Tablet VI — Ishtar and the Bull of Heaven	7 min
10	Tablets VII & VIII — The Death of Enkidu	2 min
11	Tablet IX — The Wanderings of Gilgamesh	3 min
12	Tablet X — The Waters of Death	5 min
13	Tablet XI — The Flood	13 min
14	Tablet XII — The Netherworld	5 min
15	A Note on This Edition	3 min
16	Cuneiform Plates	2 min
17	Maps of the Gilgamesh World	2 min
18	Translation Notes & Sources	4 min

The Pennsylvania Tablet

The Pennsylvania Tablet

Gilgamesh rose to recount a dream; he spake to his mother: “O my mother, in the course of this my night, I grew joyful and walked among the young men. There came down upon me stars of heaven; a block of Anu fell upon my back. I strove to lift it — it was too heavy for me; I tried to roll it, but I could not move it. The land of Uruk gathered around it, the warriors kissed its feet. I set my forehead against it, they steadied me. I lifted it, and I bore it to thee.”

The mother of Gilgamesh, who knows all things, spake to Gilgamesh: “Gilgamesh, a man like thyself was born in the open steppe, and the mountains reared him. Thou wilt see him and rejoice; the warriors will kiss his feet. Thou wilt embrace him, and thou wilt bring him to me.”

He lay down and saw a second dream, and he told the dream to his mother: “O my mother, I have seen another! I beheld a dream within the streets of Uruk of the broad marketplace. An axe lay there, and the people were gathered about it. The axe — its shape was strange. I looked at it and I rejoiced; I loved it like a wife, I caressed it. I lifted it and set it at my side.”

The mother of Gilgamesh, who knows all things, spake to Gilgamesh: “Gilgamesh, the man whom thou sawest, thou wilt love him like a wife, and he will be a comrade striving at thy side.”

For the one who would be a match for him, Gilgamesh unfolded the dream.

Enkidu was dwelling before the harlot; she lay with him, she opened her lap. Enkidu forgot the place where he was born. Six days and seven nights Enkidu approached and lay with the courtesan. The harlot opened her mouth and spake to Enkidu: "I look at thee, Enkidu; thou art become like a god. Why with the wild beasts dost thou roam the open steppe? Come, let me lead thee into the midst of Uruk of the broad marketplace, to the holy temple, the dwelling of Anu. Enkidu, arise; let me guide thee to Eanna, the dwelling of Anu, where Gilgamesh is perfect in strength. And thou, thou wilt love him as thou lovest thine own self. Come, rise from the trampled ground, from the shepherd's resting-place."

He heard her words and took in her speech; the counsel of the woman fell into his heart. She tore off a garment: one half she put upon him, the other half she clothed herself. She took his hand, and like a god she led him onward to the shepherd's camp, to the place of the sheepfold. There the shepherds gathered about him.

[And he, Enkidu — his birthplace was the mountain — with the gazelles he ate the grass, with the herd he slaked his thirst, with the wild beasts he drank water, and his heart was glad.]

The milk of the wild creatures he would suck. Bread was set before him; he drew back, he stared and looked askance. Enkidu knew not how to eat bread; to drink strong drink he had not been taught.

The harlot opened her mouth and spake to Enkidu: "Eat the bread, Enkidu — it is the staff of life; drink the strong drink — it is the custom of the land." Enkidu ate the bread until he was sated; of the strong drink he drank seven goblets. His spirit loosened; he grew merry; his face shone. He rubbed the shaggy hair from his body; he anointed himself with oil, and he became a man. He donned a garment, and he was like a bridegroom. He took up his weapon; he hunted lions so that the shepherds might lie down at night; he drove off wolves, he caught lions. The chief herdsmen lay down in

peace: Enkidu was their watchman — a man of might, a single champion. He spake to the shepherds ...

... he made a feast of joy. He lifted up his eyes and saw the man. He spake to the harlot: "Shamhat, bring the man hither. Why has he come? I would learn his name."

The harlot called the man; he approached, and Enkidu beheld him. "Alas! ... how thou dost trouble thyself! Evil is thy coming; heavy is thy toil." He opened his mouth and spake to Enkidu: "The ways of marriage ... the customs of the people ... the office of manhood. For the city of the toil-basket and the sustenance of the city ... for the king of Uruk of the broad marketplace, open the marriage-chamber for the bridegroom; for Gilgamesh, king of Uruk of the broad marketplace, open the marriage-chamber. He shall have the bride of destiny: he first, the husband afterwards. By the counsel of the gods it is so ordained; at the cutting of his navel-cord his fate was decreed for him."

At the hero's words his face grew pallid.

... Enkidu walked in front, and the harlot followed behind him. He entered into Uruk of the broad marketplace; the people thronged around him. He stood in the street of Uruk of the broad marketplace, and the folk gathered about him, saying: "In form he is the very likeness of Gilgamesh, only shorter in stature, ... strong ... In the land he is mighty of strength. The milk of wild beasts he sucked. Ever within Uruk the warriors are purified, the champion is proclaimed for the man whose face is fair. For Gilgamesh — as for a god — a rival is raised up for him. For Ishara a couch is laid, and Gilgamesh beds the bride thereafter; in the night he approaches, and she is taken."

He rushed, and Enkidu stood in the street; he blocked the going of Gilgamesh to display his might.

... Gilgamesh ... against him came Enkidu; ... he tore his hair. He rose and went before him. They met in the market-place of the land. Enkidu barred the gate with his foot, and

Gilgamesh he would not let enter. They seized each other; like raging bulls they wrestled; they demolished the doorpost; the wall shook. Gilgamesh and Enkidu seized each other again; like raging bulls they wrestled; they demolished the doorpost; the wall shook. Gilgamesh bent his knee to the ground; his fury subsided, and his breast grew still. When his breast had grown still, Enkidu spake to Gilgamesh: "As one alone thy mother bore thee, the wild cow of the sheepfold, Ninsunna, who raised thy head above all men. Kingship over the people Enlil has decreed for thee."

Second tablet. ... Four sixties.

Tablet I — The Coming of Enkidu

Tablet I — The Coming of Enkidu

Tablet I

Of this tablet, only a few fragments survive. The true beginning, as determined by Professor Haupt, reads:

He who has looked upon the entire tale of Gilgamesh, who knows all that befell him—all of it together— who has beheld every kind of wisdom, who knows the mysteries and has seen what is hidden, who brings back news from before the flood— he has traveled roads of immense distance and grown weary. And now he has written upon a memorial tablet all these other things... the wall of Uruk-šuppuri.

(Lines ten and eleven are lost.)

He spoke a charm that never leaves him... the god who, from the earliest days...

Thus far the first page of Haupt's text. To this same tablet—as Haupt and Jeremias have shown—belongs page fifty-one, which narrates a siege of the city of Erech.

...His cattle forsook him. He went down to the river, pushed his boat into the water, and covered it. ...Full of sorrow, he wept bitterly. He returned, perhaps, to the city of Gan-gan-na, which the enemy had utterly destroyed.

The she-asses trampled down their own foals; the cows in their madness turned upon their calves. And as the cattle were seized with panic, so were the people. Like doves, the

maidens sighed and mourned.

The gods of Uruk, the strong-walled, assumed the shape of flies and buzzed about the streets. The protecting deities of Uruk, the strong-walled, took the shape of mice and hurried into their holes.

Three years the enemy besieged the city of Uruk; the city's gates were barred, the bolts shot home. Even Ishtar the goddess could make no headway against them.

But Bel opened his mouth and spoke to Ishtar, the queen, saying to her...

(Here the text breaks off. Traces remain—perhaps twenty-one lines—among them the words, “Babylon, the city of joy.” The king's death must have plunged the city into the consternation described above. Then Gilgamesh came as her savior, and in time he reigned as her king.)

Tablet II — The Taming of Enkidu

Tablet II — The Taming of Enkidu

Tablet II

Gilgamesh ruled Uruk. But his rule grew harsh, for he compelled every young man into his service and took every maiden to his court. The people cried out, and their lament went up:

“Gilgamesh leaves no son to his father, no maiden to the warrior, no wife to her husband! Everywhere our wailing rises—gods of heaven, and you, Bel of Uruk, who brought this son into being, save us! He has no rival in all the land. Day and night we pour out our cry: he, the ruler of strong-walled Uruk, the lofty one, the cunning one—Gilgamesh—leaves no daughter to her mother, no maiden to the warrior, no wife to her husband.”

The gods of heaven heard their cry. They cried aloud to Aruru, the goddess: “Aruru, you created him. Now create his equal, so that their hearts may clash and they may fight, and let Uruk stand as witness.”

Aruru heard. She conceived in her heart a man in the image of Anu. She washed her hands, took up a bit of clay, and cast it upon the ground. So she made Enkidu—the hero, a towering offspring, the force of Ninib.

His whole body was covered with hair. He wore the hair of his head long like a woman’s; his flowing locks were luxuriant as those of the corn-god. He knew nothing of the

customs of the people or of settled land. He was clad in garments like the god Ner. He ate grass with the gazelles, slaked his thirst beside the beasts at the waterholes, and sported with the creatures of the water.

Now Gilgamesh dreamed a dream in Uruk, and he sought to understand it. He spoke to his mother:

“My mother, in my nightly vision I became strong and moved among the heroes. And from the starry heaven a meteor of Anu fell upon me. I bore it and it grew heavy upon me; I grew weak and could not endure its weight. The land of Uruk gathered around it. The heroes kissed its feet. It was raised up before me. They stood me up. I bore it and carried it to you.”

His mother, who knows all things, answered him: “O Gilgamesh, one like you—born in the wilderness, whom the mountain has reared—you will see him, and you will rejoice. Heroes will kiss his feet. You will spare him and strive to lead him to me.”

Then Gilgamesh slept again and saw another dream. He reported to his mother: “My mother, I have seen another dream. My likeness I saw in the streets of Uruk of the plazas. An axe was brandished, and they gathered around him; and the axe made him angry. I saw him and I rejoiced, I loved him as a woman, I embraced him. I took him and regarded him as my brother.”

His mother, who knows all things, spoke: “The man you saw, whom you embraced like a woman, means he is to be associated with you.” And Gilgamesh understood the dream.

A hunter—a trapper of men—lay in wait for Enkidu at the mouth of the well. One day, two days, three days he waited. When he saw Enkidu and his cattle, the hunter’s face grew troubled. He went home, sad and moaning, his heart heavy, his face clouded, sorrow filling his mind. His face looked like one who sees something far off and terrible.

The hunter had meant to advance against Enkidu at Gilgamesh’s command, but the sight

of him drew back in fear. He could not seize him.

The hunter opened his mouth and spoke to his father: "My father, there is a hero out there whose strength no single man can match. Like the strength of Anu is his might. He roams all the mountains; with the beasts of the field he regularly feeds. His feet are set ever toward the entrance of the well. I am afraid of him, I do not dare to approach him. He has filled up the pits I dug and destroyed the nets I had spread. He has let the cattle and the beasts escape from my hands and will not let me hunt them."

His father answered him: "Go to Uruk, to Gilgamesh the king. Tell him of this wild man. Take with you a woman, a courtesan, to lure him. When Enkidu sees her, his beasts will abandon him." ...

The hunter journeyed to Uruk and came before Gilgamesh. He repeated his trouble: how Enkidu terrified him, how he filled his pits and destroyed his nets, how the beasts escaped.

Gilgamesh said to the hunter: "Go, my hunter, and take with you Shamhat, the enticer. When the beasts come down to the watering place, let her strip off her garment and bare her body. When Enkidu sees her, he will approach her, and the animals that were his companions will forsake him."

The hunter went and took the woman Shamhat. They traveled together, and on the third day they reached the appointed place. They waited at the mouth of the well, where the cattle drank and the water creatures sported.

One day, two days, they waited. Then Enkidu came—he whose home was the mountains, who ate grass with the gazelles, drank with the cattle, and rejoiced with the creatures of the water.

Shamhat, the enticer of men, saw him. The hunter said, "There he is! Now bare your womb, uncover your nakedness, and let him enjoy you. Do not be ashamed; yield to his

desire. He will see you and come near. When he lies in your arms, his cattle—raised with him on the steppe—will forsake him.”

So Shamhat bared her womb, uncovered her nakedness, and let him enjoy her. She was not ashamed, but surrendered to his lust. She stripped off her garment, he lay in her arms, and she satisfied his desire after the fashion of women. He pressed his breast hard against hers.

For six days and seven nights Enkidu lay with Shamhat. When he had sated himself with her charms, he turned back toward his cattle. But the gazelles saw him and fled. The cattle of the steppe turned away. Then Enkidu was startled; his body grew slack, his knees stiffened, for his beasts had left him, and he could no longer run as before. And yet, as he stood still, a new thought took hold of him. He turned again, captivated, to the feet of the harlot, and looked up into the face of the enticer. While she spoke, he listened closely.

Shamhat said to Enkidu: “You are magnificent, Enkidu; you shall be like a god. Why then do you lie down with the beasts of the field? Come, let me take you to strong-walled Uruk, to the glorious house, the dwelling of Anu and Ishtar, the palace of Gilgamesh, the hero perfect in strength, who towers above men like a mountain bull.”

As she spoke, he hearkened to her wise words, and his heart yearned for a friend. Enkidu said to her: “Take me, then, Shamhat. Lead me to the glorious house, the sacred seat of Anu and Ishtar, to the palace of Gilgamesh, the hero perfect in strength, towering over men like a mountain bull.” ...

She took his hand and led him like a god. She stripped off one garment and clothed him with it; another she kept on herself. She brought him to the fertile meadow, the place of the sheepfolds. There the shepherds gave him food. But Enkidu, born of the mountain, used to eating grass with gazelles, drinking with cattle, sporting with water creatures, and sucking the milk of wild beasts—he did not know how to eat bread or drink wine.

He broke off bread and stared, uncertain.

The woman opened her mouth and spoke: “Eat the food, Enkidu—the provender of life! Drink the wine, the custom of the land!” Enkidu ate until he was full, and drank seven goblets of wine. His spirit loosened, he grew merry, his heart was glad, and his face shone.

They shaved the hair from his body, anointed him with oil, and he became like a man. He put on garments and looked like any man. He took up a weapon and went after lions, so that the night shepherds could rest. He plunged the dagger; he overcame the lions. The great shepherds lay down in safety, for Enkidu was their protector. The strong man, the unique hero, spoke to the shepherds ...

While they made merry, Enkidu lifted his eyes and saw a man. He spoke to the woman: “O courtesan, lure that man here. Why has he come to me? I will destroy his name.”

The woman called out to the man, who approached and saw Enkidu. He cried out: “Away! Why do you tremble so? Your activity is evil.” Then the man opened his mouth and spoke to Enkidu:

“To have a family home is the destiny of men, and the prerogative of the nobles. Load the workbaskets for the city! Lay up food for the city! For the King of Uruk of the plazas, open the hymen, perform the marriage act! For Gilgamesh, the King of Uruk of the plazas, open the hymen, perform the marriage act! With the legitimate wife one should cohabit—so it has been, and so it will be. By the decree pronounced by a god from the cutting of his umbilical cord, such is his fate.”

At this speech, Enkidu’s face grew pale. ...

Enkidu went ahead, and Shamhat followed behind him. They entered Uruk of the plazas. The people gathered around him. Standing in the streets, the men said: “He is like Gilgamesh in form, though shorter in stature. He is powerful, tall in structure ...

overseeing? In the land strong of power has he become. Milk of cattle he was accustomed to suck." Steadily they came ...

The heroes rejoiced. He became a leader.

Then, for the hero of fine appearance, for Gilgamesh, a rival had appeared. For Ishtar a couch was spread, and Gilgamesh lay down; but in the night he fled and approached ... And Enkidu stood in the street and blocked the path of Gilgamesh. At the exhibit of his power ...

Strong ... Gilgamesh. Against him Enkidu proceeded, his hair luxuriant. He started toward him. They met in the plaza of the district. Enkidu blocked the gate with his foot, not permitting Gilgamesh to enter. They seized each other, like oxen, and fought. The threshold they demolished; the wall they impaired. They wrestled, Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Like oxen they fought; the threshold they demolished; the wall they impaired. Then Gilgamesh bent his foot to the ground; his wrath subsided, his breast quieted. When his breast was quieted, Enkidu spoke to Gilgamesh:

"As a unique one, your mother bore you. The wild cow of the stall, Ninsun, has exalted your head above all men. Kingship over men Enlil has decreed for you."

Second tablet, enlarged beyond the original. 240 lines.

The Yale Tablet

The Yale Tablet

Column I

About ten lines missing

..... [my friend(?)] [some great task(?)] so precious [Why] do you desire [to do this]
thing? some [precious thing(?)] greatly [why] do you [desire] it? They came
down [to the for]est, a work they carried out among [the people], they assembled and
performed a rite, they convened. missing missing

About seventeen lines missing

..... fate and my [friend] they admonished [words]
they [gave back] [to the] great lady, they made ready for [over]throw.

Column II

About eleven lines missing

..... name "A rival [for him who draws near] create for him, and ..." lamentation
The mother of [Gilgamesh, wise in all things,] be[fore Shamash lifted her hands,]
..... "Why, [now,] [have you set upon my son a heart that will not] [sleep, you have
laid this upon him?]"

About four lines missing

[While Enkidu's eyes filled] with [tears,] he [struck his] heart and [grievously] sighed.
 [While Enkidu's] eyes filled with tears, [he struck] his heart, [grievously] he sighed.
 [Gilgamesh] turned his face, [spoke] to Enkidu: "[My friend, why] are your eyes [filled with tears,] [why is your heart] stricken, [why do you sigh so grie]vously?" [Enkidu opened his mouth] and spoke [to Gilgamesh:] "The tidings, my friend, have torn my [sinews;] my arms hang limp, my strength is sapped." Gilgamesh opened his mouth and spoke to Enkidu:

About four lines missing

Column III

..... [even Hu]wawa the mighty [the ce]dar [he destroyed.] [I will go down to the forest of] cedar, before the hidden its drum I will open it." Enkidu opened his mouth and spoke to Gilgamesh: "Know, my friend, in the highlands, when I roamed among the herds, for a single double-hour the forest's border— [who can] go down into its heart alone? Huwawa—his roar is the flood, his [mouth] is Girra, his breath is death. Why do you desire to do this thing, to engage in battle against the onslaught of Huwawa?" Gilgamesh opened his mouth and [spoke] to Enkidu: "..... the thicket of his [in the fo]rest ..." to ... the dwelling [of Huwawa] ... axes ... you shall be ... I will [go down to the forest.]" Enkidu opened his mouth and spoke to [Gilgamesh:] "When we [go together] to the forest [of cedar,] its guardian, Gilgamesh, the [fighter,] the mighty one who does not [sleep,] Huwawa, [offspring of] Adad is he"

Column IV

For the protection [of the cedar forest,] seven terrors [Enlil assigned to him.] Gilgamesh opened [his mouth] and spoke to [Enkidu:] "Who, my friend, can ascend to [heaven?]

Only the gods dwell forever with [Shamash.] Mankind numbers its days; whatever he does is but wind. Here and now, you fear death— your heroic strength comes to nothing. Let me go before you, let your mouth cry out ‘Fear not!’ If I fall, let me set up my name. Gilgamesh, [against] Huwawa the mighty, I shall He who was born in the wild you grew up among the grass you have known the lion, you know all. like the shepherd(?) ... offerings. ... [you cry out,] you trouble my heart. [I will set my hand] and [go up and] fell the cedar. [A name] that is written I shall set down. [Cast,] my friend, for the kilns let me smelt— [let the bellows] pour the metal before us.” [They cast] for the kilns, they smelted, the craftsmen sat working: they poured great axes, hatchets of three talents each they poured; they poured great daggers, two-edged swords of two talents each, thirty-mina hafts for their sides, the bosses of the daggers, thirty minas of gold. Gilgamesh and Enkidu were laden with ten talents each. the gate of [Uruk] seven the people heard and gathered, they assembled [in the square of] Uruk-of-the-market. [Gilgamesh sat down] [in the square of Uruk] of the market, [Enkidu] sat before him. [thus] he [spoke:] [“..... of Uruk of the mar]ket [before him”]

Column V

“Gilgamesh, the one whom they speak of, let me see him! He whose name fills the lands — I will hem him in among the cedar forest, like a mighty youngling of Uruk I will make the land hear. I will set my hand and cut down the cedar, a name that is written I shall establish.” The elders of Uruk of the marketplace gave word back to Gilgamesh: “You are young, Gilgamesh, your heart bears you away; you do not know what you are doing. We have heard of Huwawa—strange is his form. Who can confront his weapons? For a single double-hour the forest’s border— who can go down into its heart? Huwawa—his roar is the flood, his mouth is Girra, his breath is death. Why do you desire to do this thing, to engage in battle against the onslaught of Huwawa?” Gilgamesh heard the

words of his [counsellors,] he looked and laughed [at his friend.] “Now, my [friend,] thus I [speak:] I fear him, but [I will go to the forest;] [I will go with you to the cedar forest.”]

About five lines missing

..... may your ... may your god you, [may he guide] your path to [safety.] At the quay of [Uruk of the marketplace] Gilgamesh bowed down [before Shamash,] the word [he spoke:] “I go, Shamash, [I take hold of] your hands. Thereafter, may I be preserved alive; bring me back to the quay in [Uruk.] Cast [a shadow (of protection) over me.]” Gilgamesh called his [friend ...] his instructions
..... when

About two lines missing

Column VI

“[I am] Gilgamesh, [the foremost] of the land, the path I have never [travelled,] provisions I do not know. [Thereafter] may I safely [return,] [may I praise] you with a joyful heart. [in splendour] your finery [may I seat] you upon thrones.”
its gear, [the great lords brought him] [bow] and quiver, [into] his hand they placed them. He took the axe; his belt [to the] god, another ... [with] his [dagger] at his side, they prepared to go. [Once] again they brought Gilgamesh near: “[Until when] will you turn again to the heart of Uruk?” [The elder]s blessed him. [For the jou]rney they counsel Gilgamesh: “Do not rely, Gilgamesh, on your strength alone; let your provisions suffice, and guard yourself. Let Enkidu go before you— [the wagon-rut] he marks, the road he has travelled. [To the] entrance of the forest, [Huwawa’s] all are scattered. [Let the one who goes] first protect his companion, [let him guard] his [road, let him guard his own.] [May Shamash] grant you [your desire.] [May] the utterances of your mouth be [made real before your eyes,] may he open for you the blocked path, may he smooth the road for your tread, the mountain for your foot. May the night bring you a word of joy;

may Lugalbanda stand by you in your quest. Like a child may your quest come to full growth. In the river of Huwawa that you aspire to, wash your feet; in your resting places, dig a well, let clear water flow in your water-skin. [Chilled] water, pour out to Shamash, [and remember] Lugalbanda.” [Enkidu] opened his mouth and spoke to Gilgamesh: “[Since] you have resolved, proceed to go; [do not] fear, set your trust in me. [Set your] hand on its onslaught, [on the road] that Huwawa has travelled. speak and instruct them.”

Three lines missing

Left Edge

..... as much as they went with me. they weep for you.
[there]after in joy [when they heard] this speech of his, alone [he set] the road: “Go, Gilgamesh, [I will go before you.] Let your god go let [him] show you [the road.]”
Gilgamesh and [Enkidu] between [them]

Tablet II — The Meeting of Gilgamesh and Enkidu

Tablet II — The Meeting of Gilgamesh and Enkidu

Enkidu sat before her.

...

“Why...”

She spoke what lay in his own heart, under her instruction. Who knows that heart?

Shamhat stripped off her clothing; with one piece she clothed him, and clothed herself with the second. She took hold of him as the gods do, and brought him to the hut of the shepherds. The shepherds gathered all around him and said to one another in wonder:

“How this youth resembles Gilgamesh! Tall in stature, towering to the battlements over the wall! Surely he was born in the mountains; his strength is as mighty as the meteorite of Anu!”

They set food before him; they set beer before him. But Enkidu knew nothing of eating bread for food, and of drinking beer he had not been taught.

The harlot spoke to Enkidu:

“Eat the food, Enkidu—it is the way one lives. Drink the beer, as is the custom of the land.”

Enkidu ate the food until he was satisfied. He drank the beer—seven jugs!—and became

expansive, and sang with joy! He was elated, and his face glowed. He splashed his shaggy body with water and rubbed himself with oil, turning into a human. He put on clothing and became like a warrior.

Then he took up his weapon and chased lions so the shepherds might eat. He routed the wolves, he chased the lions. With Enkidu as their guard, the herders could lie down at night. A wakeful man, a singular youth, he was twice the height of ordinary men.

...

Then he raised his eyes and saw a man. He said to the harlot:

“Shamhat, send that man away! Why has he come? I will call out his name!”

The harlot called to the man, went over to him and spoke:

“Young man, where are you hurrying? Why this furious pace?”

The young man spoke, saying to Enkidu:

“They have invited me to a wedding, as is the custom of the people. ... the selection of brides... I have heaped up luscious delights on the ceremonial platter for the wedding! For the King of Broad-Marted Uruk the veil of the people is open for the choosing of a girl. For Gilgamesh, the King of Broad-Marted Uruk, the veil of the people is open for the choosing. He will lie with the destined wife first; her husband afterward. This is decreed by the counsel of Anu. From the moment his umbilical cord was cut, it was destined for him.”

At the young man's words, Enkidu's face flushed with anger.

...

Enkidu strode ahead; Shamhat followed after him.

He walked down the street of Uruk-Haven, and blocked the way through Uruk-the-Sheepfold. The land of Uruk stood around him, the whole land assembled about him, the populace thronged around him, the men clustered about him, and kissed his feet as if he were a tiny baby.

Suddenly a handsome young man appeared. For Ishara the marriage-bed was ready; for Gilgamesh, as for a god, a counterpart had been set up.

Enkidu blocked the entry to the marital chamber, and would not allow Gilgamesh to enter. They grappled with each other at the doorway of the marriage chamber; in the street they locked together, in the public square of the land. The doorposts trembled, and the wall shook.

...

Gilgamesh bent his knees, the other foot planted on the ground; his fury ebbed, and he turned his chest away. Then Enkidu said to Gilgamesh:

“Your mother bore you ever unique— the Wild Cow of the Enclosure, Ninsun— your head is lifted above other men; Enlil has destined for you the kingship over the people.”

...

They kissed each other, and became friends.

“His strength is the mightiest in the land! His strength is as mighty as the meteorite of Anu.”

The mother of Gilgamesh spoke to Gilgamesh. Ninsun said to her son, plaintively:

“My son... ..”

She went up into his gateway, and plaintively implored:

“Enkidu has no father or mother; his shaggy hair no one cuts. He was born in the wilderness; no one raised him.”

Enkidu stood there and heard the speech. He sat down and wept; his eyes filled with tears. His arms felt limp, his strength weakened.

They took each other by the hand.

Enkidu made a declaration to Gilgamesh.

...

“... in order to protect the Cedar Forest, Enlil assigned Humbaba as a terror to human beings. Humbaba’s roar is a Flood, his mouth is Fire, and his breath is Death! He can hear a rustling in his forest a hundred leagues away! Who would go down into his forest? Enlil assigned him as a terror to human beings, and whoever goes down into his forest—paralysis will strike!”

Gilgamesh spoke to Enkidu, saying:

“What you say...”

...

“Who, my friend, can ascend to the heavens? Only the gods can dwell forever with Shamash. As for human beings, their days are numbered, and whatever they keep trying to achieve is only wind! Now you are afraid of death— what has become of your bold strength? I will go before you, and your voice may call out: ‘Go on closer, do not be afraid!’ Should I fall, I will have established my fame. They will say: ‘It was Gilgamesh who locked in battle with Humbaba the Terrible!’ You were born and reared in the wilderness; a lion leaped at you, so you have lived it all!

...

I will undertake it, and I will cut down the cedar. It is I who will establish fame that lasts forever! Come, my friend—I will go to the forge, and we will have them cast the weapons before our eyes!”

Holding each other by the hand, they went to the forge.

...

The craftsmen sat and discussed with one another:

“We must fashion the axe... The hatchet should weigh a full talent... Their swords shall be one talent apiece... Their armor, one talent...”

Gilgamesh spoke to the men of Uruk:

“Listen to me, men...”

...

“You, men of Uruk, who know... I mean to make myself more mighty, and I will go on a distant journey! I will face fighting such as I have never known; I will set out on a road I have never traveled! Give me your blessing! I will enter the city gate of Uruk. I will devote myself to the New Year’s Festival. The New Year’s Festival will take place, with celebrations— and they will keep shouting ‘Hurrah!’”

Enkidu spoke to the Elders:

“Tell him: he must not go to the Cedar Forest— the journey is not to be made!”

The Noble Counselors of Uruk rose up, and delivered their advice to Gilgamesh:

“You are young, Gilgamesh; your heart carries you away. You do not know what you are saying! Humbaba’s roar is a Flood, his mouth is Fire, his breath Death! He can hear any

rustling in his forest a hundred leagues away! Who would go down into his forest? Who, even among the Igigi gods, can confront him? In order to keep the Cedar safe, Enlil assigned him as a terror to human beings.”

Gilgamesh listened to the words of his noble counselors.

...

Tablet III — The Forest Journey

Tablet III — The Forest Journey

Tablet III

All that follows — the great ordeal, the grief, the quest beyond the waters of death — turns upon this: Enkidu became the friend of Gilgamesh. Not merely ally, not servant, but companion and equal, the one soul on earth who could meet the king eye to eye.

Two fragments, recovered from the dust and set down in Haupt's collection, belong — so Jeremias argued — to the third and fourth columns of this tablet. They are broken vessels, but the wine they hold is intact enough to taste.

The first fragment seems to be a woman's address — perhaps it was Shamhat who spoke:

... the gods let you enter forsaken was the consort ...

And he saw it alone, and he unburdened his heart, and spoke to his friend:

"A dream I dreamed in my night's sleep. The stars of heaven fell upon the earth. I stood there, frightened — "

... his face became disturbed like a lion's claws were his nails the dream strengthened me
...

The second fragment gives us the sun. Shamash, the god who sees all, spoke with Enkidu — and after that speaking, Enkidu's "angry heart became quieted." For Enkidu longed to return to his mountain home, to the wild beasts and the open steppe; but

Shamash urged him to stay. Shamhat stepped forward once more, and the promises that came were royal: the friendship and brother-love of Gilgamesh, and honours beyond what any man of the wild had ever known.

Thus spoke Shamash:

“Come. On a fine and noble couch — on a fine couch — he will let you recline. He will set you upon a couch, a seat at his left hand. The kings of the earth shall kiss your feet. The people of Uruk shall lament before you, and the nations shall labour for your sake. ... All that is carried after you shall be yours, and in the midst of it shall he make his camp.”

Enkidu listened to the word of Shamash, the warrior-hero...

... and his angry heart became quieted.

Another slab — page eighty-seven of Haupt — appears to be the continuation. Here it is Gilgamesh himself who speaks, promising Enkidu the very gifts that Shamash had offered: the same couch, the same left-hand seat, the same world bowing down. The echo is deliberate, as though heaven and earth were speaking with one voice.

The gods had a purpose in drawing these two together. The scattered pieces of Tablets IV and V give the key: they tell of war, of the city of Uruk rising against the Elamite despot Humbaba, of the giant's death and the enthronement of Gilgamesh as king. The gods themselves entered the fight, determined to destroy Humbaba and to break the rule of the hostile power called Humba. And so this poetic narrative — the friendship, the journey to the cedar forest, the slaying of the monster — is the mythic memory of a great upheaval, the story under the story: an Elamite dynasty overthrown, a Babylonian sun risen in its place.

Tablet IV — The Cedar Forest

Tablet IV — The Cedar Forest

The tablet survives in only a few small fragments, yet these are enough to show that it describes the preparations for the capture of the fortress of Humbaba, the Elamite king. Tablets IV and V together hold the historical kernel of the epic's narrative.

As Dr. Jeremias reconstructs it, Tablet IV once ran something like this:

In the first column, Enkidu stands before the king of the gods—Marduk, perhaps—speaking of Humbaba, whom he and Gilgamesh intended to kill, and whose corpse the vultures might devour. They asked the god to look with favour upon their fight:

We watched over you, O king of the gods. Now watch over us as well.

Then Gilgamesh tells Enkidu to go to the lofty palace of the great queen, she who knows all things. Both go to the great prophetess, who is described in the second column—her breast ornaments and her crown especially noted.

After this the narrative continues:

Before Shamash he sacrificed a smoke-offering, poured out a libation; he lifted his hands toward Shamash and prayed:

"Why have you troubled the heart of Gilgamesh? Now you have taught him, and a far road he travels—toward Humbaba. An unknown fight he is about to enter, an unknown war he is about to set forth. From the day he goes until he returns again, until he comes to the splendid cedar wood, until he shall have killed Humbaba the tyrant— all the many

evils that shall befall him shall ruin him. On the day when you ..."

The end of the second column tells of the preparations for the great fight. The forces of the country assembled; the army completed its gear; the heroes put on their armour. Then the two friends set out together.

The fifth column opens with these words:

That the cedar wood might remain intact, Bel has made it a terror for the people. The roaring of Humbaba was like a storm cyclone; his mouth was full of blasphemy, his breath a killing hot wind. ... whoever descends into his park hears a roaring in the forest. That the cedar forest might remain intact, Bel has made it a terror for the people. Whoever enters it, pestilence will overtake him.

And Gilgamesh spoke to Enkidu, saying:

Plates 57 and 58 Dr. Jeremias assigns to the last column of Tablet IV. Gilgamesh recounts to Enkidu a favourable dream, a splendid dream, in which he saw the corpse of Humbaba.

Then in the morning they set out; every twenty double leagues they took a meal, every thirty double leagues they rested. Before Shamash they dug a hole, and Gilgamesh poured his sacrificial meal into the hole, saying:

"Mountain, bring a dream to Enkidu! Let him see dream-visions, O Shamash."

Then they slept.

About midnight Gilgamesh awoke, arose, and spoke to his friend Enkidu:

"My friend, did you call me?"

Then he told him of a third dream:

"The dream I dreamed was very terrible: heaven thundered, earth quaked; day grew dark, darkness came up; lightning set in, fire flared up, sated with destruction and filled with death. Then suddenly the light darkened, the fire was quenched ... fell down, turned into smoke ..."

Enkidu heard this dream and said to him:

[The rest of this tablet is broken away.]

[Here we append the Babylonian Yale tablet, which relates material about the preparations for battle with Humbaba.]

... my friend ... [Something] that is exceedingly difficult— why do you desire to do this? ... something that is very difficult ... why do you desire to go down to the forest?

A message they carried among men, carried about. They made a ... they brought ...

(About seventeen lines missing.)

... my friend ... they raised ... answer they returned.

To the woman they proceeded—

(About eleven lines missing.)

... name ...

The one who is a rival to him subdue and ...

Wailing ...

The mother of Gilgamesh, who knows everything, before Shamash raised her hand:

"Why now have you stirred up the heart of my son? Restlessness imposed upon him ..."

(About four lines missing.)

The eyes of Enkidu filled with tears. He clutched his heart; sadly he sighed. The eyes of Enkidu filled with tears. He clutched his heart; sadly he sighed.

The face of Gilgamesh was grieved. He spoke to Enkidu:

"My friend, why are thy eyes filled with tears? Thy heart clutched— dost thou sigh sadly?"

Enkidu opened his mouth and spoke to Gilgamesh:

"Attacks, my friend, have exhausted my strength. My arms are lame, my strength has become weak."

Gilgamesh opened his mouth and spoke to Enkidu:

(About four lines missing.)

... until Humbaba, the terrible, ... I destroyed. I will go down to the cedar forest, ... the jungle ...

... I will open it.

Enkidu opened his mouth and spoke to Gilgamesh:

"Know, my friend: in the mountain, when I moved about with the cattle, to a distance of one double hour into the heart of the forest— alone I penetrated within it, to Humbaba, whose roar is a flood, whose mouth is fire, whose breath is death. Why do you desire to do this? To advance toward the dwelling of Humbaba?"

Gilgamesh opened his mouth and spoke to Enkidu:

"... the covering I will destroy ... in the forest ...

The dwelling of Humbaba— the axe ...

I will go down to the forest."

Enkidu opened his mouth and spoke to Gilgamesh:

"When together we go down to the cedar forest, whose guardian—O warrior Gilgamesh— a power without rest, Humbaba, an offspring of ... Adad ...

To keep safe the cedar forest, Enlil has decreed for it sevenfold terror."

Gilgamesh opened his mouth and spoke to Enkidu:

"Whoever, my friend, overcomes terror, it is well for him with Shamash for the length of his days. Mankind will speak of it at the gates. Wherever terror is to be faced, thou, forsooth, art in fear of death. Thy prowess lacks strength. I will go before thee. Though thy mouth calls to me— *thou art afraid to approach*— if I fall, I will establish my name.

Gilgamesh—the corpse of Humbaba, the terrible— has snatched from the time that my offspring was born ...

The lion restrained thee— all of which thou knowest ... and ... open ... like a shepherd ...

When thou callest to me, thou afflictest my heart. I am determined to enter the cedar forest. I will indeed establish my name.

The work, my friend, to the artisans I will entrust. Weapons—let them mould before us."

The work to the artisans they entrusted. A dwelling they assigned to the workmen.

Hatchets the masters moulded: axes of three talents each they moulded. Lances the masters moulded; blades of two talents each, a spear of thirty mina each attached to them. The hilt of the lances—thirty mina in gold.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu were equipped with ten talents each.

... in Uruk, seven ... its ... the people heard and ... proclaimed in the street of Uruk, of the plazas.

Gilgamesh brought him out. In the street of Uruk, of the plazas, Enkidu sat before him. Thus he spoke:

"... of Uruk, of the plazas ... before him— Gilgamesh, of whom they speak—let me see! Whose name fills the lands. I will lure him to the cedar forest, like a strong offspring of Uruk. I will let the land hear that I am determined to lure him into the cedar forest. A name I will establish."

The elders of Uruk, of the plazas, brought word to Gilgamesh:

"Thou art young, O Gilgamesh, and thy heart carries thee away. Thou dost not know what thou proposest to do. We hear that Humbaba is enraged. Who has ever opposed his weapon? To one double hour into the heart of the forest— who has ever penetrated it? Humbaba, whose roar is a deluge, whose mouth is fire, whose breath is death. Why do you desire to do this? To advance toward the dwelling of Humbaba?"

Gilgamesh heard the report of his counsellors. He saw and cried out to his friend:

"Now, my friend, thus I speak: I fear him, but I will go to the cedar forest. I will go with thee to the cedar forest."

(About five lines missing.)

May ... thee— thy god may ... thee; on the road may he guide thee in safety.

At the rampart of Uruk, of the plazas, Gilgamesh kneeled down before Shamash. A word then he spoke to him:

"I will go, O Shamash—thy hands I seize hold of. When I shall have saved my life, bring me back to the rampart in Uruk. Grant protection to me."

Gilgamesh cried: "My friend ..."

His oracle ...

(About two lines missing.)

"I, Gilgamesh, the strong one of the land ... a road which I have never trodden; ... food ... do not know. When I shall have succeeded, I will praise thee in the joy of my heart, I will extol the superiority of thy power, I will seat thee on thrones."

... his vessel ...

The masters brought the weapons; bow and quiver they placed in his hand. He took the hatchet ... his quiver.

... to the god a second time, with his lance in his girdle, ... they took the road.

Again they approached Gilgamesh:

"How long till thou returnest to Uruk?"

Again the elders approached him. For the road they counselled Gilgamesh:

"Do not rely, O Gilgamesh, on thy strength. Provide food and save thyself. Let Enkidu go before thee— he is acquainted with the way, he has trodden the road to the entrance of the forest of Humbaba.

... He who goes in advance will save the companion. Provide for his road and save thyself.

May Shamash carry out thy endeavor. May he make thy eyes see the prophecy of thy mouth. May he track out for thee the closed path. May he level the road for thy treading. May he level the mountain for thy foot. During thy night, the word that will rejoice— may Lugal-banda convey it, and stand by thee in thy endeavor. Like a youth may he establish thy endeavor. In the river of Humbaba, as thou planest, wash thy feet. Round

about thee dig a well— may there be pure water constantly for thy libation. Goblets of water pour out to Shamash. May Lugal-banda take note of it."

Enkidu opened his mouth and spoke to Gilgamesh:

"Since thou art resolved to take the road, thy heart be not afraid—trust to me. Confide to my hand his dwelling."

On the road to Humbaba they proceeded.

... command their return ...

(Three lines missing.)

... were filled. ... they will go with me.

... joyfully.

Upon hearing this word of his, alone, the road he levelled.

"Go, O Gilgamesh—I will go before thee. May thy god go ... May he show thee the road."

Gilgamesh and Enkidu knowingly ...

Between them ...

[End supplement]

Tablet V — The Battle with Humbaba

Tablet V — The Battle with Humbaba

Tablet V — The Battle with Humbaba

Column I. The two heroes have breached the sacred forest and now stand before the stronghold of Humbaba. They have forced the gate. Looming around them, the great wood rises, and they stare, astonished, at the crowns of the cedars and at the mouth of the cedar grove where Humbaba himself walked with towering strides. The ways are laid with care, the paths kept clear. They behold the cedar hill, dwelling of gods, sanctuary of Ernini. Before the mountain, a single cedar blazes with splendour; its shade is deep and sweet, and the sight of it fills the heart with gladness — or so the broken line suggests. Here the column shatters; what followed was likely a longer vision of the palace and the world around it. A fragment on page 27 preserves a speech of Gilgamesh to Enkidu in which he speaks again of the corpse left for the vultures. In Columns II and III (pages 25 and 28, and perhaps 74 and 86) the two rehearse their earlier triumphs, a good omen for the fight now closing upon them. Of the remaining columns, nothing survives except a handful of lines at the end of Column V (page 26), where the very last words name the *head of Humbaba*. Those two words confirm that the preceding verses told how the monster was fought and slain. Then, as Babylonian scribes always did, two lines follow: the first gives the opening line of Tablet VI, and the second declares this to be the fifth tablet of the great series, using the first line of Tablet I as the catchword that binds the whole epic together — a lamp for the reader moving through the twelve.

Tablet VI — Ishtar and the Bull of Heaven

Tablet VI — Ishtar and the Bull of Heaven

After the victory, Gilgamesh cleansed his weapons and polished his arms. He stripped off the armour he had worn, cast aside his soiled garments, and put on clean raiment. He clothed himself with his ornaments and placed upon his head the crown, setting his diadem in place.

Then Ishtar, the lofty goddess, lifted her eyes to him. Longing for his favour and his love, she spoke:

“Come, Gilgamesh, be my husband. Give me your manly strength. Be my husband and I will be your wife, and I will set you in a chariot studded with precious stones and gold, its wheels of gold, and its shafts of sapphire. You shall harness great *kudanu*-lions to it. Under the sweet-smelling cedars you shall enter our house. And when you enter, you shall sit upon a high throne, and the people shall kiss your feet; kings, lords, and rulers shall bow down before you. Whatever mountain and country produce, they shall bring to you as tribute. ... your sheep shall bear twin ewes. ... mules they shall bring as tribute. Your majesty shall ride in a splendid chariot, drawn by a span without equal.”

Gilgamesh opened his mouth and answered her; he spoke to the lofty goddess Ishtar. The opening lines of his speech are nearly all lost, and only a few fragments remain. He refused the love she offered, reminding her that all her former lovers had come to grief through her, and he declared he was not willing to share their fate.

“Where is Tammuz, your husband, who was to remain forever? And what has become of the *allallu*-bird? ... Well, I will tell you plainly the bitter fruit of your coqueties.

To Tammuz, the husband of your youth, you brought weeping and grief upon him every year.

The *allallu*-bird, so bright of colour, you loved, but you broke its wing and crushed it, so that now it sits in the woods crying, ‘O my wing!’

You also loved a lion, powerful in his strength; seven and seven times you dug a snaring pit for him.

You also loved a horse, preëminent in battle, but with bridle, spur and whip you forced it onward, forced it to run seven doubleëleagues at a stretch. And when it was exhausted and wanted to drink, you still drove it on, bringing weeping and grief to its mother, Si-li-li.

You also loved a shepherd of the flock, ... who continually poured out incense before you, and for your pleasure slaughtered lambs day by day. You struck him and turned him into a tiger, so that his own sheepëboys drove him away, and his own dogs tore him to pieces.

You also loved a farmer, a gardener of your father, who continually brought you delicacies, and daily adorned your table for you. You cast your eye upon him and turned his mind, saying: ‘Oh, my farmer boy, let us enjoy your manly strength. Let your hand come forth and take away my virginity.’ But the farmer spoke to you and said: ‘Me!—what is this you ask of me? Mother, you have not baked, and I will not eat. The food that I would eat is bad and bitter, and it is covered with cold and numbness.’ And when you heard such words, you struck him and changed him into a cripple, compelling him to lie upon a couch, so that he could no more rise from his bed.

And now you would love me; but my fate would be the same as theirs.”

When Ishtar heard these words, she grew enraged. She went up into heaven and came before Anu, her father, and to Antum, her mother, she went, saying:

“My father, Gilgamesh has insulted me. Gilgamesh has upbraided me with my evil deeds, my deeds of evil and of violence.”

Anu opened his mouth and answered her, the mighty goddess Ishtar: “Do not remain so disconsolate, even though Gilgamesh has upbraided you with your evil deeds, your deeds of evil and violence.”

But Ishtar opened her mouth and spoke to Anu, her father: “My father, create for me a Heaven-Bull.”

[The following seventy lines are so broken that only guesses can be made. As Dr. Jeremias has observed, they recall the threats Gilgamesh uttered before the ocean palace, and especially the “Descent of Ishtar into the Netherworld,” where the goddess in her fury forces entrance. Here, too, in heaven, she would smash everything if her wish were not granted. Anu, her father, hesitates but is forced to yield; he creates the Heaven-Bull, and now Ishtar breaks out: “I will have revenge.” The full account of the fight between the two heroes and the Heaven-Bull is almost completely lost. The few surviving lines say: They hunted him, and Enkidu attacked the Heaven-Bull ... and grasped him by his heavy tail. On an old Babylonian cylinder we see the bull rearing on its hind legs, Enkidu holding it by head and tail while Gilgamesh plunges the dagger into its heart. The broken lines also tell us that three hundred heroes took part in the struggle.]

After the heroes had killed the bull and their hearts were satisfied, they brought a thank-offering to Shamash, the sun god. The narrative then continues:

Ishtar climbed the wall of Uruk, the strong-walled, and let out a piercing cry, breaking into a curse: “Woe to Gilgamesh, who has grieved me and killed the Heaven-Bull!”

When Enkidu heard these words of Ishtar, he tore out the right side of the Heaven-Bull and flung it in her face, saying: "And so I will defeat you; I will do to you exactly as I have done to him. I will hang its heart upon your side!"

Then Ishtar gathered her followers who ruin men—the hierodules and the sacred prostitutes—and over the right side of the Heaven-Bull she wept and lamented.

Gilgamesh assembled the people and all his workmen, and they marvelled at the size of the bull's horns: thirty minas of precious stones was their worth, and half an inch their thickness; they could hold six measures of oil. For the anointing of his god Lugal-tur-da, he dedicated them. He took up the horns and hung them in the shrine of his lordship.

Then the heroes washed their hands in the river Euphrates, took to the road, and rode through the streets of Uruk. The people of Uruk assembled and stared with wonder at the heroes. Gilgamesh spoke to the servants of his palace and cried to them: "Who is glorious among the heroes? Who shines among the men?" And they answered: "Gilgamesh is glorious among the heroes, Gilgamesh shines among the men!" [Lines 204 to 206 are lost.]

Gilgamesh held a joyful feast in his palace. Then the heroes slept, stretched out on their couches. And Enkidu slept, and saw a vision in his sleep. When he rose in the morning he interpreted the dream and said to Gilgamesh: "My friend, why have the great gods taken counsel like this?"

That last line is the beginning of the next tablet. The sixth tablet ends with its colophon: The sixth tablet of the series "He who has seen the history of Gilgamesh."

[TABLETS VII and VIII Only a few fragments remain, yielding very little. Tablet VII must have begun with Enkidu's account of his dream on the morning after the victory-feast, and closed with his death, brought about by the goddess Ishtar. Pages 53 and 54 of Haupt's edition are assigned by Dr. Jeremias to Tablet VIII, since the obverse

of that tablet speaks of Enkidu's sickness and death. In one column Enkidu calls on his friend to perform a heroic deed; they halt before a forest gate, which Enkidu addresses: "There is no other tree like you; six gar is your height, two gar your thickness," and he adds, "I know you." In another column he mourns: "In good health I went forth, my friend ... But the dream I dreamed has come true." And Enkidu lay sick for twelve days: on the first and second day ... on the third and the fourth ... on the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth ... on the eleventh, the twelfth day ... then he called to Gilgamesh. The few traces show that the hero received his wound in a fight he had dreaded. The lament for the dead in Tablet XII shows it was a severe and unusual combat. Of his end, probably told in Tablet IX, it is said repeatedly: "Earth has snatched him away."]

Tablets VII & VIII — The Death of Enkidu

Tablets VII & VIII — The Death of Enkidu

Tablets VII and VIII

Only a handful of fragments survive; from them, only the faintest outline can be drawn. Tablet VII must have opened with Enkidu recounting the dream that visited him on the morning after the victory celebration in Uruk, and it closed with his death — the death the goddess Ishtar brought upon him. Pages 53 and 54 (see also 55) of Professor Haupt's edition are assigned by Dr. Jeremias to Tablet VIII, since the column preceding them (Column VI), inscribed on the obverse of the same tablet, speaks of Enkidu's sickness and death (see Tablet IX).

In Column I, Enkidu urges his friend toward some heroic deed worthy of his renown. They have halted before a gate in the forest, and Enkidu addresses it thus:

There is no other tree like thee. Six gar in height — one gar equaling twelve or fourteen cubits — and two gar in thickness.

Enkidu also says of it: "I know thee."

And in Column VI he moans:

I went forth in good health, my friend . . . But the dream I dreamed has been fulfilled.

There Enkidu lay for twelve days — on the first day, and on the second, when Enkidu

upon his couch [lay sick]; on the third and the fourth [...] on the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth day, and all the days following, when Enkidu [lay sick upon his couch]; the eleventh day, the twelfth day [...] when Enkidu lay upon his couch [...]

Then he called out to Gilgamesh.

The few traces remaining in the lines that follow reveal that the hero received his wound in a fight which, in fearful premonition, "he had feared." The lament for the dead in Tablet XII tells us it must have been a fight both dire and extraordinary. Of his end — narrated, it would seem, upon Tablet IX — it is said again and again in Tablet XII: "Earth has snatched him away."

Tablet IX — The Wanderings of Gilgamesh

Tablet IX — The Wanderings of Gilgamesh

The tablet opens with the lament of Gilgamesh for the death of his friend, and with his resolve to seek his ancestor Utnapishtim, that he may learn the mystery of Utnapishtim's apotheosis and at the same time secure recovery from a loathsome disease with which Ishtar had smitten him.

Gilgamesh wept bitterly over the loss of Enkidu, his friend. He lay stretched out upon the ground, saying:

"I will not die like Enkidu — but weeping has entered into my heart; fear of death has befallen me, and I lie here stretched out upon the ground. To test the strength of Utnapishtim, the son of Kidin-Marduk, I will set out. I will go at once."

He arrived at the mountain ravine by night. Lions he saw, and he was afraid; but he lifted his head to the god Sin and prayed. To the great majesty of the god his cry rose up, and Sin hearkened and saved him, even him.

In the night he saw a vision and a dream — lions [...] were at ease. He lifted the axe in his hand and drew the sword from his belt. Like a javelin he threw himself among them; he wounded, killed, and scattered them.

[The rest of the column is lost.]

He came to the mountain of Mashu, whose entrance is guarded daily by monsters, whose back extends to the dam of heaven, and whose breast reaches down to Aralu.

Scorpion-men guard its gate; dreadful terror they spread, and it is death to behold them. Their splendour is fearful, overthrowing the mountains; from sunrise to sunset they guard the sun.

Gilgamesh beheld them, and with fear and terror his face grew dark. His mind became confused at the wildness of their aspect.

But one scorpion-man said to his wife:

"He who comes toward us — flesh of the gods is his body."

The wife answered the scorpion-man:

"Two-thirds of him resembles a god; one-third only is man."

The scorpion-man replied and said to her:

"One of the gods has given the order; he has travelled over far-distant roads until he should come to me. The mountains he has crossed are steep."

[The remainder is broken away.]

Seeing that the monster regarded him with friendly eyes, Gilgamesh recovered from his fright and spoke of his resolve — to go to Utnapishtim, his ancestor, who had been removed into the assembly of the gods and had thus power over life and death.

The scorpion-man replied by describing the difficulties and dangers of such a march through the mountain of Mashu. No one had yet been able to do so — twelve miles of heavy darkness in all directions, and none had passed through. But the hero was not

discouraged. The scorpion-man acceded to his urgent request and opened to him the gate of the mountain.

And now begins the wearisome march:

One mile he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Two miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Three miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Four miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Five miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Six miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Seven miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Eight miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Nine miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Ten miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Eleven miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light. Twelve miles he marches — thick is the darkness, and it does not grow light.

At last the hero left the mountain. On the shore of the sea he beheld a beautiful and wonderful tree. Diamonds it bore as fruit. Its branches hung down, beautiful to behold. Crystal and antimony the branches bore; with fruit it was laden, dazzling the eye.

Other precious trees were also there.

[The tablet continues in the following column.]

Tablet X — The Waters of Death

Tablet X — The Waters of Death

The tale resumes where the colophon of Tablet IX left off: the divine maiden Siduri, whose name means “she who is my refuge,” sits on the throne of the sea—a poet’s way of saying she dwells in a palace at the ocean’s edge. Gilgamesh, clothed in the raw skin of a beast, stumbles toward her from the wilderness. Another wall rises before him, and again he gives voice to his grief, furious at the unending roads that still stretch ahead.

Siduri looks up and sees him from a long way off—a wild shape against the dunes. She speaks to herself, taking counsel in her heart: “Because this . . . How can a man in such a state hope to succeed?” And as he draws near, she retreats into her ocean-palace. Its gate she bolts, and bolts again, shutting fast the door. But Gilgamesh hears the scrape of the bar. He lifts his hand—the tablet is broken here—and calls out to her: “Siduri, why do you stare at me? Why do you lock your gate? I will break it down if you do not open it!”

The lower portion of the clay is destroyed, but we know what must have happened: Siduri described to him the impossibility of the road ahead—a sea no one can cross, a passage that leads only into darkness.

Then Gilgamesh spoke again, for his sorrow would not be silenced. He told her why he had come, and he wept for Enkidu, his friend now crumbled back to dust. The thought of sharing that dust was a weight he could not bear. And he said to her, to Siduri: “Tell me, O Siduri, which way leads to Utnapishtim? What is its direction? Show me. If it can be crossed, I will cross the sea. If it cannot, I will run there across the open land.”

Siduri answered him: “Gilgamesh, there has never been a crossing here. No one since the days before days has ever crossed this sea. Shamash the hero crosses it—but who besides Shamash can do such a thing? Hard is the crossing, and deadly the way; sealed are the Waters of Death that bolt its entrance. How, then, will you cross? And if you reach those waters, what will you do? But listen: there is Urshanabi, the boatman of Utnapishtim. He stands beside the Stone Ones; in the cedar forest he fells timber. May your eyes find him. If it is possible, cross with him; if not, then turn back.”

When Gilgamesh heard this, he seized the axe from his shoulder and drew the sword from his belt. He charged into the grove and fell upon the Stone Ones like a javelin, shattering them. Then he stood at the mouth of the Waters of Death, the grim sea that wraps the world, beyond which the Isle of the Blessed lies hidden.

There Gilgamesh found Urshanabi and poured out his grief, using the same words he had spoken before, ending with a desperate plea: “Ferry me across!” Urshanabi looked at the shattered stones and answered him: “Your hand, Gilgamesh, has blocked the crossing. You have smashed the Stone Ones, and the thing that was is no more. Now take the axe at your side, go into the forest, and cut one hundred and twenty punting poles, each five gar long. Make them ready, and we will see what can be done.”

Gilgamesh did as he was told. He took the axe, drew the sword, felled the wood, shaped one hundred and twenty poles, smeared them with pitch, and carried them to Urshanabi. Then the two embarked. The small craft tossed on the swell as they pushed out. A journey of forty-five days they closed in three, and so Urshanabi brought them to the Waters of Death.

Now the hardest trial began. The ferryman urged Gilgamesh not to give in—not while the black water lay beneath them. They labored day after day, and Gilgamesh worked the pole until his strength ebbed. When he could no longer stand, he loosened his belt and rested, worn thin.

Far off, Utnapishtim looked down and saw the boat. He studied it and spoke to himself in wonder: “Why are the Stone Ones of the ship smashed? And the one who rides in it—he does not bear my mark. Is he a man? He has not the right side of a man. I look: is that not a human being? I look: is that not a man? I look: is that not a god? He resembles me in everything.”

At the start of Column V, Gilgamesh drew near the shore. Still sitting in the boat, he poured out his tale before his ancestor. He spoke of the panther of the field they had fought, of the Heaven-Bull they had slain, of Humbaba the tyrant whose roar filled the cedar forest, and of other beasts and trials. He told of his friend’s sickness, of that slow and terrible death, and then his voice broke: “Now I weep for him. I have wandered through every land, climbed sheer mountains, crossed dreadful seas—all of it for nothing. The friend I loved has turned to clay. Enkidu, my friend. I will not lie down like him. I will not sink where he has gone.”

And Gilgamesh said to Utnapishtim: “I have come here to see the one they call the Distant. I have turned toward him for help. I have traveled all lands, crossed steep mountains, and traversed every sea.”

Column VI must have held Utnapishtim’s long answer, in which he told the hero that even he could not unlock the door of death. Death comes to all; no one escapes. As long as houses are built, as long as tablets are sealed, as long as brothers quarrel, as long as hatred and strife stalk the earth, as long as the river carries water to the sea—so long is no likeness of death drawn. No man knows his hour. When the Alu-demon and the Eziz-demon greet a man, then the Anunnaki, the great gods, assemble, and the goddess of fate, she who determines destiny with them, decides. They determine death and life. But the day of death is hidden from mankind.

Here ends the tenth tablet of the great epic.

Tablet XI — The Flood

Tablet XI — The Flood

Translated from the 1901 scholarly English of William Muss-Arnolt

A Note on This Tablet

The eleventh tablet of the Gilgamesh epic contains the famous account of the great flood. The cuneiform text was first published by Friedrich Delitzsch in his *Assyrische Lesestücke*, third edition, pages 101–109, and more recently in a complete critical edition by Paul Haupt in the second part of his *Das Babylonische Nimrodepos*, pages 133–150, with all variant readings and supplementary notes. The original publication on plates 50 and 51 of the fourth volume of *Inscriptions of Western Asia* was re-issued with many improvements by Theophilus G. Pinches in 1891, plates 43 and 44. Translations of the deluge story, or portions of it, have been made since the days of George Smith by Fox Talbot, Jules Oppert, F. Lenormant, Peter Jensen, Alfred Jeremias, H. Winckler, Heinrich Zimmern, L. W. King, C. J. Ball, and others. According to Professor Jastrow, the forthcoming transliteration and translation by Professor Haupt in the third edition of Schrader's *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament* promises to be the finest yet published. See also the article "Deluge" by H. Zimmern and T. K. Cheyne in Cheyne and Black's *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, London, 1899, volume I, columns 1055–1066. Tablet XI continues the dialogue between Utnapishtim and Gilgamesh begun in columns V and VI of the preceding tablet.

Gilgamesh said to him, to Utnapishtim the Far-Away:

"I gaze on you in wonder, Utnapishtim. Your form is unchanged; you are shaped like me. And your very nature is untouched—you are as I am, even though you have departed from the living. Yet my heart still wrestles with what no longer lies upon you. Tell me: how did you come to dwell here and win eternal life among the gods?"

From the shore, Utnapishtim, beloved of the gods, now told the story of the flood to the hero, who sat listening in his ship.

Utnapishtim said to Gilgamesh:

"I will reveal to you, Gilgamesh, a hidden thing, and tell you the secret counsel of the gods. The city of Shurippak—you know it— lies on the bank of the Euphrates. That city grew corrupt, and the gods within it resolved to send a deluge—all the great gods: their father Anu; their counselor, the warrior Bel; their leader Ninib; their champion, Ennugi. But Ea, lord of unfathomable wisdom, spoke against them. He whispered their plan to a reed-hut, saying:

'Reed-hut, reed-hut! Wall, wall! Reed-hut, hear! Clay-brick, attend! Man of Shurippak, son of Ubara-Tutu, tear down your house and build a ship. Forsake your possessions; look to your life. Abandon your goods; save your life, and bring living seed of every kind into the ship. The ship you build—measure its plan with care: let its breadth and length be well proportioned, then launch it upon the sea.'

I took heed and said to Ea, my lord: 'I will do, my lord, as you command; I will observe and carry out your word. But what shall I answer the city, the people, and the elders?'

Ea opened his mouth and spoke to me, his servant: 'Tell them this: I know that Bel hates me. I can no longer dwell in your city, nor set foot on Bel's territory in safety. I shall go

down to the Deep, to live with my lord Ea. Upon you he will pour out rich blessings—fowl in plenty and fish in abundance, herds of cattle and a bountiful harvest. Shamash has appointed a time: when the lords of darkness send a destructive rain at evening, the sign will come.'

The lower part of the first column is damaged. What remains begins:

Once early dawn appeared, I dreaded the light of day and gathered together all that was needed. On the fifth day I laid out the plan. The walls rose sixty cubits high; the deck measured sixty cubits across. I roofed it over and sealed it shut. I built it in six stories, making seven floors in all; the interior of each I divided into nine compartments. Water-ports I cut within. I fitted a rudder and added all that was necessary.

Three great measures of pitch I smeared on the hull; three great measures of asphalt I sealed within. Three great measures of oil the workmen carried aboard in jars. One measure I poured out as offerings; the other two the boatman stowed in the hold.

For the temples of the gods I slaughtered oxen; I killed lambs each day. Jars of beer, of oil, and of sweet wine I poured out freely, like river water, as libations. I held a feast like that of the New Year. To the god Shamash my hands brought oil.

At last the ship was finished. The work had been heavy. I rigged tackle above and below, and when all was done the ship settled into the water to two-thirds of its height.

With everything I possessed I filled it; with all the silver I had I filled it; with all the gold I had I filled it; with living creatures of every kind I filled it. Then I embarked my whole family and my kin, cattle of the field, beasts of the field, and all the craftsmen—I brought them aboard.

Shamash had appointed a time: 'When the lords of darkness send a destructive rain at evening, enter the ship and shut its door.' That sign came to pass. The lords of darkness sent a destructive rain at evening. I watched the storm draw near, and feared to see it. I

entered the ship and shut the door. To the boatman Purur-bel I entrusted the great vessel and all it held.

At dawn a black cloud rose from the horizon. Within it the storm god Adad thundered; Nabu and Marduk went before him. The destroyers swept across mountain and plain. Dibbara tore loose the mooring cable. Ninib went forth and made the riverbanks overflow. The Anunnaki lifted their torches high, and with their radiance they lit the whole world. The storm of Adad lashed even to the heavens; all light turned to darkness. The land was flooded as though it were nothing. The wind howled, and in a single day the waters rose above the mountains. Like a charge of battle it fell upon the people. Brother could not look upon brother. Men's faces could not be known, even from heaven.

Even the gods were afraid of the storm. They fled and took refuge in the heaven of Anu. There the gods crouched like dogs, cowering along the walls of the sky.

Ishtar cried out like a woman in labor, and the lady of the gods wailed aloud:

'The world of old has turned back to clay, because I consented to this evil in the assembly of the gods! How could I agree to this ruin in the council of the gods— the destruction of my own people? What I created, where is it now? It fills the sea like the spawn of fish.'

The gods wept with her over the Anunnaki. The gods bowed down and sat there weeping, their lips pressed tight in fear and dread.

Six days and nights the wind blew, and storm and tempest ravaged the land. When the seventh day drew near, the tempest, the flood, the raging war that had stormed like an army began to subside. The sea grew still; the hurricane ceased; the storm died away.

I looked out over the sea and raised my voice, but all of humankind had turned to clay. The riverbeds lay flat as the surrounding fields. I opened a window, and light fell upon

my cheek. Dumbfounded I sank back and sat weeping, tears streaming down my face. I looked in every direction: everywhere, only sea.

After twelve days a strip of land rose from the water. Toward Mount Nisir the ship drifted. On Mount Nisir the ship came to rest and would not move.

The first day, the second day, Mount Nisir held the ship fast and would not let it go. The third day, the fourth day, Mount Nisir held the ship fast and would not let it go. The fifth day, the sixth day, Mount Nisir held the ship fast and would not let it go.

When the seventh day drew near I sent out a dove and let her go. The dove flew here and there, but finding no place to rest she returned. Then I sent out a swallow and let her go. The swallow flew here and there, but finding no place to rest she too returned. Then I sent out a raven and let her go. The raven flew away and saw that the waters had receded. She settled down to feed, waded out, and did not return.

Then I released everything to the four winds and offered a sacrifice. I poured a libation on the peak of the mountain. Seven and seven censers I set in place and filled them with calamus, cedarwood, and sweet incense. The gods smelled the fragrance— yes, the gods smelled the sweet fragrance— and gathered like flies around the one who made the offering.

When Ishtar, lady of the gods, drew near, she lifted up the jeweled ornaments that Anu had made to fulfill her desire and spoke:

'You gods, by my necklace I swear— I will not forget these days. I will remember them, and never let them pass from mind. Let the gods come to the offering, but Bel shall not come, for he rashly sent the flood and gave my people over to destruction.'

When Bel drew near and saw the ship, he was seized with fury. Rage against the Igigi, the heavenly gods, filled his heart.

'Who has escaped with his life?' he cried. 'No mortal was to have survived the ruin!'

Ninib opened his mouth and answered Bel, the warrior: 'Who but Ea could have done this? Does not Ea know every secret art?'

Then Ea opened his mouth and spoke to Bel, the warrior: 'You, the wise one among the gods—you, warrior— how rash of you to bring a flood! Let the sinner bear his sin, let the wicked answer for his wickedness; but be merciful—do not destroy everything. Be forbearing—do not wipe out all life. Instead of sending a flood, let lions come and thin mankind. Instead of sending a flood, let leopards come and thin mankind. Instead of sending a flood, let famine come and ravage the land. Instead of sending a flood, let plague come and strike the people. I did not reveal the secret counsel of the great gods. I let Atrahasis see it in a dream, and so he heard the mystery of the gods.'

Thereupon Bel made his decision. He went up into the ship, took me by the hand, and led me out. He led out my wife and made her kneel beside me. He turned us to face each other, and standing between us, he blessed us:

'Once Utnapishtim was mortal; now Utnapishtim and his wife shall be exalted like the gods. Utnapishtim shall dwell far away, at the mouth of the rivers.'

Then they bore me off and set me to live far from all others, at the mouth of the rivers."

When Utnapishtim had finished his tale, he turned to Gilgamesh and said:

"And now—which of the gods will grant you strength, that the life you desire may be yours? Come now: sleep."

For six days and seven nights Gilgamesh lay as one struck lame. Sleep came over him like a storm wind.

Then Utnapishtim said to his wife: "Look—here is the hero who yearns for life. Sleep has seized him like a storm wind."

His wife answered Utnapishtim, the Far-Away: "Touch him; let the man eat of the charmed root. Let him, restored to health, return by the road he came and pass through the great gate back to his own land."

Utnapishtim said to his wife: "His suffering moves you. Very well—cook his food and set it at his head."

And while Gilgamesh slept on board the ship, she cooked the food and set it at his head.

And while he slept, first his food was prepared; second, it was peeled; third, it was moistened; fourth, it was cleansed; fifth, the essence of age was added; sixth, it was cooked; and seventh, in a single instant the man was transformed, for he had eaten of the charmed food.

Then Gilgamesh spoke and said to Utnapishtim, the Far-Away: "I had sunk down, and sleep had overcome me. You charmed me in an instant and woke me."

Utnapishtim said to Gilgamesh: "Eat your food, Gilgamesh, and hear what was done to it. First your food was prepared; second, it was peeled; third, it was moistened; fourth, it was cleansed; fifth, the essence of age was added; sixth, it was cooked; and seventh, I transformed you in an instant, and you ate of the charmed food."

Then Gilgamesh said to Utnapishtim, the Far-Away: "What shall I do, Utnapishtim? Where shall I go? A demon has seized my friend. Death sits upon my couch. Wherever I turn, there is death."

Utnapishtim said to Urshabani, the ferryman: "Urshabani, you who have been at my side—this boat is yours. Turn away anyone who tries to board. The man before you is

covered with sores; the eruption of his skin has disfigured the beauty of his body. Take him, Urshabani, to the place of washing, where he may bathe his sores in running water and let them become white as snow. Let him cast off his ruined skin, and the sea will carry it away. Let his body be made whole. Let a fresh turban be set on his head and a new garment wrapped around his nakedness, so that until he returns to his city, until he reaches his own road, the cloth shall wear no threadbare patch—it shall remain ever new."

Urshabani took him and brought him to the place of washing. There he bathed his sores in running water until they were white as snow. He cast off his ruined skin, and the sea carried it away. His body was made whole. A fresh turban was set on his head and a new garment wrapped around his nakedness, so that until he returned to his city, until he reached his own road, the cloth wore no threadbare patch—it remained ever new.

Then Gilgamesh and Urshabani boarded the boat, and as they journeyed the vessel pitched and swayed.

When they had returned from the place of washing, the wife of Utnapishtim spoke to her husband, the Far-Away: "Gilgamesh departed, and labored, and pulled at the oar. What will you give him now, that he may return to his country?"

Gilgamesh raised the punting pole and drew the boat to shore.

Then Utnapishtim spoke to Gilgamesh: "Gilgamesh, you departed, and labored, and pulled at the oar. What shall I give you now, that you may return to your country? I will reveal to you, Gilgamesh, a mystery, and the decision of the gods I will make known to you.

There is a plant that grows beneath the waters, rooted like a thorn; its barb stings like a bramble. If your hands can reach that plant, you will find what you seek."

When Gilgamesh heard this he opened a way into the water. He bound heavy stones to

his feet, and they dragged him down to the sea. There he found the plant. He grasped it, and its thorn tore his hands. He cut the stones free; one tumbled away and he cast the other after it.

Gilgamesh said to Urshabani, the ferryman: "Urshabani, this is a plant of great renown — a plant that grants the desire of the heart. I will carry it to Uruk the strong-walled, plant it there and tend it. Its name shall be: 'The Old Man Made Young Again.' I will eat of it and return to the vigor of my youth."

And they set out on the road to Uruk the strong-walled.

Every twenty leagues they stopped to eat; every thirty leagues they rested. Then Gilgamesh saw a pool of cool water. He waded in and bathed. A serpent smelled the plant and rose from the water; the plant slipped from his grasp. The serpent took it and slithered away, and as it went, it shed its skin.

Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept. Tears ran down his cheeks, and he said to Urshabani, the ferryman: "For whom did my hands labor, Urshabani? For whom has the blood of my heart been spent? I have won nothing for myself. The serpent of the earth has claimed the prize. After journeying only twenty leagues the plant was snatched from me, as I reached into the pool and lowered my arm. I see the sign—it has become an omen for me. I must turn back, leaving the ship on the shore."

So they continued on—stopping every twenty leagues to eat, every thirty leagues to rest—until they came at last to Uruk the strong-walled.

Then Gilgamesh spoke to Urshabani, the ferryman: "Urshabani, climb the wall and walk about Uruk. Examine its foundation; inspect its brickwork. Is it not built of fired brick? Is its foundation not set in pitch? Sevenfold is your name."

The closing lines of the tablet cannot be fully translated. What follows is the first line of Tablet XII, and then the colophon: this is the eleventh tablet of the Epic of Gilgamesh, faithfully copied from the original, and belonging to the library of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria.

Tablet XII — The Netherworld

Tablet XII — The Netherworld

Only the second half of the first column survives. It tells how Gilgamesh, returned at last from his long journey, still mourned for his friend Enkidu. To the one who could no longer hear, he cried out:

You go to the temple no more. You dress in white no more. Like any mortal you have fallen. You anoint yourself no more with the sweet fat of bulls, and men no longer gather round you, drawn by that fragrance. You stretch the bow upon the ground no more—yet those you slew with the bow now surround you. You carry the staff no more; the spirits of death have taken you captive. You tie sandals to your feet no more. You raise the war-cry on the earth no more. The wife you loved—you kiss her no more. The wife you hated—you strike her no more. The son you loved—you kiss him no more. The son you hated—you strike him no more. The sorrows of the Netherworld have seized you, and she who is dark, she who is dark, mother Ninazu, who is dark, whose pale shining body wears no garment, whose breast, like the lid of a casket, lies bare.

In the second and third columns, Gilgamesh goes alone into the temple of the god Ningul and laments again in words that echo the same grief:

The wife he loved—he kisses no more. The wife he hated—he strikes no more. The son he loved—he kisses no more. The son he hated—he strikes no more. The sorrows of the earth have snatched him away, and she who is dark, she who is dark, mother Ninazu, who is dark, whose pale shining body wears no garment, whose breast, like the lid of a casket, lies bare.

Enkidu has gone down from the earth into the darkness below. Pestilence did not take him. Wasting sickness did not take him. The earth took him. The lurking demon of Nergal the pitiless did not take him—the earth took him. The battlefield did not slay him—the earth took him.

As Gilgamesh spoke these words, Ningul wept for his servant Enkidu.

Then Gilgamesh went alone to E $\bar{a}$ kur, the temple of Bel, and prayed: “Father Bel, the sting of a fly has thrown me to the ground; insects have brought me low. Enkidu has sunk into the shades. Pestilence did not snatch him away, wasting sickness did not snatch him away—the earth snatched him away. The lurking demon of Nergal the merciless did not snatch him away; the earth snatched him away. The battlefield did not slay him; the earth snatched him away.” But father Bel could not help him.

In his sorrow, Gilgamesh turned to the Moon $\bar{g}$ od and prayed: “Father Sin, the sting of a fly has thrown me to the ground; insects have brought me low. Enkidu has sunk into the shades. Pestilence did not snatch him away, wasting sickness did not snatch him away—the earth snatched him away. The lurking demon of Nergal the merciless did not snatch him away; the earth snatched him away. The battlefield did not slay him; the earth snatched him away.” Yet Sin could not help, nor could Ea, to whom Gilgamesh appealed with the same lament.

Then Ea pleaded with Nergal, the god of the dead, the hero and lord: “Break open the chamber of the grave, open the ground, that the spirit of Enkidu, like a wind, may rise out of the ground.” When Nergal, the hero and lord, heard this prayer, he broke open the chamber of the grave and opened the ground; he caused the spirit of Enkidu to rise out of the ground like a wind.

Now the fourth column begins a dialogue between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Gilgamesh asked his friend to describe the Netherworld:

“Tell me, my friend, tell me—the look of the land that you have seen, tell me!”

But Enkidu answered: “I cannot tell you, my friend, I cannot tell you. If I described the look of the land that I have seen, you would surely sit down and weep.”

Gilgamesh said: “Then let me sit down and weep! Bitter and sad is everything that once gladdened your heart. All is like an old garment that the worm devours. What you did, what once gladdened your heart—all is cloaked in dust.”

Here the rest of the fourth column and the whole of the fifth are lost.

The sixth column closes the whole epic. Enkidu describes the fates of the dead:

“He is properly cared for who rests on a soft couch and drinks pure water—you and I have often seen such a one. The hero slain in battle—you and I have often seen such a one—his father and mother support his head, and his wife kneels at his side. Yea, the spirit of such a man finds rest. But the man whose corpse lies unburied upon the field—you and I have often seen such a one—his spirit finds no rest in the earth. The man whose spirit has no one to care for it—you and I have often seen such a one—consumes the dregs of the bowl, the broken remnants of food that are cast into the street.”

Thus the twelfth tablet, and with it the Epic of Gilgamesh, comes to its end.

Fragments of Another Recension

The following fragments, preserved on plates 16–19 of the Nimrod epic edition, belong to another recension of Tablet XII.

In one column, Enkidu curses the harlot Shamhat, who with the crafty hunter had brought a curse upon him. He prays that she will be imprisoned in the great prison; he curses her charms, her sisters, and her maidens.

The reason for the curse is given in another column: Enkidu has descended into the

Netherworld, and he tells his friend—who, with the help of witchcraft, has brought him up again—what he has seen there:

“I was brought back ... like the bird of darkness. I descended to the house of darkness, the dwelling of Irkalla; to the house where he who enters never comes out; to the road whose way does not turn back; to the house whose inhabitants are deprived of light, where dust is their food and clay their nourishment. They are clothed, like a bird, with a garment of feathers; they see no light, they sit in darkness. In that house, my friend, which I entered, crowns are cast down on the ground, and there dwell those who once wore crowns, who in days of old ruled the lands; to them Anu and Belit used to give roasted meat to eat—now cold meals are prepared, and water from leather bottles is poured out for them. In that house, my friend, which I entered, there dwell priests and ministers; there dwell soothsayers and enchanter; there dwell the temple-anointers of the great gods. There dwells Etana, there dwells Ner; there dwells also the queen of the earth, the goddess Ereshkigal. The scribe of the Netherworld bows before her ... and reads before her, and Ereshkigal lifted up her head and saw me.”

A Note on This Edition

```
import { Footnote, ScholarNote } from '@repo/sovereign-edition/components'
```

```
## How This Translation Was Made
```

This is a **Council-and-Judge literary re-rendering** — a collaboration between human scholarship and machine intelligence. The Seventy-One Press deploys multiple large language models as a council of translators, each proposing a complete rendering of a passage, which is then judged against a five-axis literary rubric by a separate AI judge. The best rendering from each generation becomes the seed for the next evolutionary step. This iteration continues until the translation converges — meaning no further improvement is achieved for several generations — or until the maximum number of steps is reached.

Our council for this edition consisted of two seats:

- **Seat A** — DeepSeek V4 Pro: a reasoning-centric model with strong editing and analytical capabilities
- **Seat B** — Mimo V2.5 Pro: a creative model with a distinctive literary voice and ear for rhythm

The judge was DeepSeek V4 Pro, scoring each candidate on five axes:

- **Literary Quality (25%)** — Does this read as great English literature? Is the prose rhythmic, evocative, memorable?
- **Fidelity (25%)** — Does the translation preserve the meaning, imagery, and emotional weight of the original?

- **Scholarly Depth** (20%) — Are ambiguities, lacunae, and textual variants handled with care? Are bracketed reconstructions clear?
- **Readability** (15%) — Can a modern reader follow this without footnotes? Is the narrative flow unbroken?
- **Voice Consistency** (15%) — Does this sound like it belongs with the other tablets?

Each tablet converged to a score between 0.90 and 0.97 on this rubric. The complete evolution history for each tablet — including every proposed rendering, every judgment, and the progression of scores — is archived in the Seventy-One experiment corpus.

Source Texts

This edition draws upon multiple sources spanning over a century of scholarship:

Public Domain Translations (adapted and re-rendered)

- **William Muss-Arnolt** (1901): Translation of the Neo-Assyrian tablets from the Library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh. Published in *Assyrian and Babylonian Literature: Selected Translations* (ed. Robert Francis Harper). This is the primary source for Tablets I–XII in this edition.
- **Morris Jastrow, Jr. & Albert T. Clay** (1920): Translation of the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania and Yale tablets. Published as *An Old Babylonian Version of the Gilgamesh Epic*, Yale Oriental Series, Researches IV, no. 3. These tablets contain the earliest known versions of the Gilgamesh cycle, predating the Standard Babylonian recension by approximately a millennium.
- **Maureen Gallery Kovacs** (1989): Translation of the Standard Babylonian version. Electronic edition by Wolf Carnahan (1998). Used for Tablet II ("The Meeting of

Gilgamesh and Enkidu") where Kovacs provides a more complete text than the older Muss-Arnolt translation.

Scholarly References

- **Andrew R. George** (2003): *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*. Oxford University Press. The definitive scholarly edition.
George's 1999 Penguin translation is the most authoritative in any language, drawing upon over one hundred clay tablets and fragments. We consulted his score transliterations, available through the SOAS Research Repository, for textual reconstruction and interpretation of lacunae.
- **Electronic Babylonian Library (eBL)**: LMU Munich's digital corpus of cuneiform transliterations. The eBL edition of the Poem of Gilgameš incorporates all discoveries since George (2003), including new fragments from the Sulaymaniyah Museum published by George in 2018–2019.
- **Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI)**: Tablet catalog and transliteration database at cdli.ucla.edu.

The Seventy-One Method

The Seventy-One Press is named for the seventy-one languages of the Biblical Table of Nations — the belief that every tongue carries a grace uniquely its own, and that translation is therefore not loss but multiplication. The Council-and-Judge method treats translation as evolution: multiple voices propose, a discerning voice selects, and the finest rendering becomes the new soil from which the next generation grows.

This is not machine translation in the conventional sense. No sentence was produced by

a single model and accepted at face value. Every passage was proposed independently by two distinct models with different creative and analytical strengths, evaluated against a rigorous literary and scholarly rubric, and evolved through multiple generations until convergence. The result is a text that has been shaped by intelligence — human and artificial — without being authored by any single hand.

Acknowledgments

This edition is dedicated to the memory of Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko, who taught that wisdom older than writing is still wisdom, and that the dead speak to us if we learn to listen. The cuneiform plate images are from the British Museum's public domain collection. The map of Mesopotamia is adapted from the Ancient World Mapping Center.

— *The Seventy-One Press, Consilience Vancouver, British Columbia July 2026*

Cuneiform Plates

A Gallery of the Tablets

The Epic of Gilgamesh survived on clay — fired in the burning of Nineveh in 612 BCE, buried for nearly two and a half millennia, and unearthed by Austen Henry Layard and Hormuzd Rassam in the 1840s. The twelve tablets that make up the Standard Babylonian recension were among some 30,000 tablets and fragments recovered from the Library of King Ashurbanipal.

Below are images of the key tablets that contain our poem. These are photographs of the originals, now housed in the British Museum. We include them not merely as decoration but as witnesses: the poem *is* the clay. The wedge-marks you see are the voice of a civilization that vanished three thousand years ago, speaking to us through fire and earth.

Plate — The Prologue Tablet

Tablet I of the Gilgamesh Epic (K.3375). The opening lines — 'He who saw the Deep' — are visible in the first column. British Museum. CC0.

Plate — The Cedar Forest Fragment

Tablet V — The Cedar Forest. This fragment of Tablet V was one of the most significant discoveries of recent decades, identified and published by Andrew George in 2014. It describes the heroes' entry into the sacred forest and their

confrontation with Humbaba. The newly discovered lines fill a gap that had puzzled scholars since the epic was first deciphered. Sulaymaniyah Museum, Iraqi Kurdistan. CC0.

Plate — Ishtar's Proposal

Tablet VI — The Repulse of Ishtar. The goddess proposes marriage to Gilgamesh; he enumerates her former lovers' fates. She sends the Bull of Heaven in revenge. British Museum. CC0.

Plate — The Flood Tablet

Tablet XI — The Flood Tablet. The most famous tablet in the collection, George Smith's 1872 decipherment of this tablet made international news as the first external corroboration of a Biblical narrative. Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh the story of the Deluge — building an ark, sending out birds, landing on a mountain, and receiving immortality. British Museum K.3375. CC0.

Plate — The Old Babylonian Dream Tablet

The Pennsylvania Tablet — an Old Babylonian version of the Gilgamesh cycle, predating the Standard Babylonian recension by nearly a thousand years. It preserves the earliest known account of the dreams of Gilgamesh and the taming of Enkidu. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and

Anthropology. CC0.

Plate — The Journey to Cedar Mountain

The Yale Tablet — another Old Babylonian tablet from the same period as the Pennsylvania Tablet. It preserves material about Gilgamesh and Enkidu's journey to the Cedar Forest and their preparations for battle with Humbaba.

Yale Babylonian Collection. CC0.

Maps of the Gilgamesh World

The Geography of the Epic

The Epic of Gilgamesh moves across the known world of ancient Mesopotamia — from Uruk in the south to the Cedar Forest in the west, across the Waters of Death, and to the mountain of Mashu at the world's edge. The geography is both real and mythological — a landscape that is at once the alluvial plain between the Tigris and Euphrates and the liminal space between life and death.

Map — Key Locations

The Ancient Near East during the time of the Gilgamesh Epic (c. 2100–1200 BCE). Major cities and geographical features mentioned in the text are marked. The Cedar Forest (Lebanon) and the proposed location of the distant realm of Utnapishtim (Bahrain/Dilmun) are shown with their mythological designations.

- **Uruk** — Biblical Erech, modern Warka, Iraq. Gilgamesh's city. Archaeological evidence places the first urban settlement here around 4000 BCE, making it one of the world's earliest cities.
- **Nippur** — Modern Nuffar, Iraq. Religious center of Sumer. Home of the temple of Enlil.
- **Shuruppak** — Modern Tell Fara, Iraq. Utnapishtim's city before the Flood.
- **Ur** — Modern Tell el-Muqayyar, Iraq. The great Sumerian port city on the Persian Gulf.

- **Cedar Forest** — The Lebanon range. Home of the guardian Humbaba. The cedars of Lebanon were prized throughout the ancient Near East for temple and palace construction.
- **Mashu** — The twin-peaked mountain at the world's edge. Guarded by scorpion-men. Possibly the Zagros Mountains to the east of Mesopotamia.
- **Dilmun** — The paradise at the mouth of the rivers where Utnapishtim dwells after the Flood. Modern Bahrain. The Sumerian paradise was a real place of refuge and refreshment.

Map — Uruk — The Walled City

The city of Uruk at its height (c. 3000 BCE). The city walls — built, according to the epic, by Gilgamesh himself — enclosed approximately 5.5 square kilometers. The Eanna temple complex, dedicated to Inanna/Ishtar, dominates the center of the city. The great platform of the Anu Ziggurat rises in the western district.

- **City Wall** — 9.5 km circumference. The epic opens and closes at this wall: "Ascend and walk about on the wall of Uruk."
- **Eanna Temple** — The House of Heaven, sanctuary of Ishtar. The harlot Shamhat was a priestess of this temple.
- **Anu Ziggurat** — The White Temple, dedicated to the sky god Anu. Visible from miles across the plain.
- **The Plazas** — Where Gilgamesh and Enkidu wrestled. The people of Uruk gathered here.

- **Euphrates River** — The eastern boundary of the city. The river that connected Uruk to the wider world.

Translation Notes & Sources

```
import { Footnote, ScholarNote, EndNote } from '@repo/sovereign-edition/components'
```

```
## On the Re-rendering of an English Translation
```

This edition occupies an unusual position in the history of Gilgamesh translation. Every English rendering of the epic since George Smith's first decipherment in 1872 has been a human scholar's work — sometimes drawing upon the work of predecessors, but always filtered through a single mind's judgment about what Akkadian means and how English should sound.

Our edition is different. We began from public domain English translations — principally Muss-Arnolt (1901), Jastrow & Clay (1920), and Kovacs (1989) — which themselves represent the best scholarship of their eras. We then subjected each tablet to the Seventy-One Council-and-Judge process, producing what might be called a *re-rendering*: a text that has passed through multiple literary sensibilities, been evaluated against multiple criteria, and converged on a version that balances fidelity with beauty.

This is not a new translation from the Akkadian. It could not be. The council does not read cuneiform. But it reads English with extraordinary sensitivity, and it can perceive — better than any single human reader — the places where a century-old translation's language has grown distant, where its rhythms have stiffened, where its imagery has lost its power to move.

The Akkadian text of Gilgamesh is riddled with gaps — places where the clay is broken, the signs effaced, the meaning lost. In the Standard Babylonian version compiled by George (2003), approximately one-third of the poem is reconstructed or missing entirely.

In this re-rendering, we have preserved the scholarly conventions of the source translations:

- **Square brackets []** enclose words that are restored from parallel passages, scholarly conjecture, or other manuscripts
- **Ellipsis marks ...** indicate unrecoverable gaps
- **Parenthetical question marks (?)** mark uncertain readings

We have not attempted to fill gaps that the source translations left open. The poem survived three millennia in fragments; we honor that condition rather than smoothing it over.

The epic uses a syncretic pantheon of Sumerian and Akkadian gods. We have preserved the name forms used in the source translations rather than imposing a consistent transliteration scheme, as the scholarly sources from different periods used different conventions. The principal gods in the epic are:

- **Shamash** (Sumerian: Utu) — Sun god, protector of Gilgamesh
- **Ishtar** (Sumerian: Inanna) — Goddess of love and war, who proposes marriage to Gilgamesh and sends the Bull of Heaven when refused
- **Enlil** (Sumerian: same) — Lord of the air, king of the gods
- **Ea** (Sumerian: Enki) — God of wisdom and sweet waters, who warns Utnapishtim of the Flood
- **Anu** (Sumerian: An) — Sky father, the most remote of the great gods
- **Bel** — "Lord," an epithet of Enlil used throughout the epic
- **Nergal** — God of the netherworld and pestilence

- **Ereshkigal** — Queen of the netherworld, sister of Inanna/Ishtar

The complete evolution history for each tablet — including every proposed translation from every council seat, every judge's score, and the progression of convergence — is archived in the Seventy-One experiment corpus at:

`sovereign-corpus/productions/seventy-one/gilgamesh/en/`

Each experiment directory contains:

- `manifest.json` — the translation parameters
- `steps/best/step_N/` — the best candidate at each evolutionary step
- `logs/evolve.log` — the complete council-and-judge dialogue
- `pipeline_state.json` — the pipeline's internal state at completion

These logs are the "scholarly apparatus" of this edition — the evidence that this translation was produced by a rigorous process rather than a single generation from a single model.

Primary Sources

- Muss-Arnolt, William. "The Gilgamesh Narrative, Usually Called the Babylonian Nimrod Epic." In *Assyrian and Babylonian Literature: Selected Translations*, edited by Robert Francis Harper, 324–368. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1901.
- Jastrow, Morris, Jr., and Albert T. Clay. *An Old Babylonian Version of the Gilgamesh Epic on the Basis of Recently Discovered Texts*. Yale Oriental Series, Researches IV, no. 3. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920.

- Kovacs, Maureen Gallery. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Translated with an introduction. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989. Electronic edition by Wolf Carnahan, 1998.

Scholarly References

- George, Andrew R. *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- George, Andrew R. *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation*. London: Penguin Books, 1999. (Revised edition published 2003.)
- George, Andrew R. "SB Gilgamesh I, Score Transliteration." SOAS Research Repository, 2007. Available at soas.ac.uk/gilgamesh.
- George, Andrew R. "The Gilgamesh Epic at Ugarit." *Aula Orientalis* 25 (2007): 237–254.
- George, Andrew R. "Back to the Cedar Forest: The Beginning and End of Tablet V of the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 66 (2014): 69–90.
- Electronic Babylonian Library (eBL). LMU Munich. "Poem of Gilgameš: Text Edition." ebl.lmu.de/corpus/L/1/4.
- Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI). University of California, Los Angeles. cdli.ucla.edu.

Technological Infrastructure

- **DeepSeek V4 Pro** — Reasoning and literary judgment model. DeepSeek AI.

- **Mimo V2.5 Pro** — Creative and literary generation model. Minimax.
- **LiteLLM Proxy** — Model orchestration and routing. BerriAI.
- **BGE-M3** — Bilingual embedding model for retrieval. BAAI.
- **ASI-Evolve Engine** — Council-and-Judge pipeline for iterative translation evolution. Consilience.
- **The Seventy-One Press** — Translation service, manifest-driven. Consilience.

This edition was typeset in the Sovereign document model and published to the Consilience Press digital archive.