

walls of the library were caved in on the tablets. Archeologists discovered the eleventh tablet in the mid-1800s, which contains an account of the flood story that pre-dates the written version of the Biblical account of Noah, leading to the recovery of all twelve tablets, plus additional fragments. In 2003, in Warka, they found what is believed to be the tomb of Gilgamesh himself.

SUMERIAN/BABYLONIAN GODS:

- **An (Babylonian: Anu):** god of heaven; may have been the main god before 2500 B.C.E.
- **Ninhursag (Babylonian: Aruru, Mammi):** mother goddess; created the gods with **An**; assists in creation of man.
- **Enlil (Babylonian: Ellil):** god of air; pantheon leader from 2500 B.C.E.; “father” of the gods because he is in charge (although An/Anu is actually the father of many of them); king of heaven & earth.
- **Enki (Babylonian: Ea):** lord of the abyss and wisdom; god of water, creation, and fertility.
- **Nanna (Babylonian: Sin):** moon god.
- **Inanna (Babylonian: Ishtar):** goddess of love, war, and fertility.
- **Utu (Babylonian: Shamash):** god of the sun and justice.
- **Ninlil (Babylonian: Mullitu, Mylitta):** bride of Enlil.



IMAGE 1.7: THE FLOOD TABLET | An original stone tablet, Tablet 11, from the Epic of Gilgamesh.

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Written by Laura J. Getty

Editor’s Note: I am combining two open access translations (one by R. Campbell Thompson and one by William Muss-Arnolt). I have made changes freely to those texts in the interests of readability: accepting many suggested additions, deleting others, altering word choice, adding some punctuation, and eliminating some of the more archaic language. By combining the two translations, the resulting text is as complete as I can make it at this point; the Thompson translation in particular draws on many fragments from Assyrian, Babylonian, and Hittite tablets that have been found after the Standard Version was discovered.

Edited by Laura J. Getty, University of North Georgia

THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

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Translated by R. Campbell Thompson and William Muse Arnold

Compiled by Laura Getty

He who has discovered the heart of all matters, let him teach the nation;
He who all knowledge possesses should teach all the people;
He shall impart his wisdom, and so they shall share it together.
Gilgamesh—he was the Master of wisdom, with knowledge of all things;
He discovered concealed secrets, handed down a story of times before the flood,
Went on a journey far away, returned all weary and worn with his toiling,
Engraved on a table of stone his story.

5

He it was who built the ramparts of Uruk, the high-walled,
 And he it was who set the foundation,
 As solid as brass, of Eanna, the sacred temple of Anu and Ishtar, 10
 Strengthened its base, its threshold....
 Two-thirds of Gilgamesh are divine, and one-third of him human....

[The tablet then tells how Gilgamesh becomes king of Uruk. The death of the previous king creates panic in the city, described below.]

The she-asses have trampled down their foals;
 The cows in madness turn upon their calves.
 And as the cattle were frightened, so were the people. 15
 Like the doves, the maidens sigh and mourn.
 The gods of Uruk, the strong-walled,
 Assume the shape of flies and buzz about the streets.
 The protecting deities of Uruk, the strong-walled,
 Take on the shape of mice and hurry into their holes. 20
 Three years the enemy besieged the city of Uruk;
 The city's gates were barred, the bolts were shot.
 And even Ishtar, the goddess, could not make headway against the enemy.

[Then Gilgamesh comes to the city as her savior, and later on appears as her king. He saves the city, but unfortunately his rule is tyrannical, and the people of Uruk complain to the gods.]

“You gods of heaven, and you, Anu,
 Who brought my son into existence, save us! 25
 He [Gilgamesh] has not a rival in all the land;
 The shock of his weapons has no peer,
 And cowed are the heroes of Uruk.
 Your people now come to you for help.
 Gilgamesh arrogantly leaves no son to his father, 30
 Yet he should be the shepherd of the city.”
 Day and night they poured out their complaint:
 “He is the ruler of Uruk the strong-walled.
 He is the ruler—strong, cunning—but
 Gilgamesh does not leave a daughter to her mother, 35
 Nor the maiden to the warrior, nor the wife to her husband.”

The gods of heaven heard their cry.
 Anu gave ear, called the lady Aruru: “It was you, O Aruru,
 Who made the first of mankind: create now a rival to him,
 So that he can strive with him; 40
 Let them fight together, and Uruk will be given relief.”
 Upon hearing this Aruru created in her heart a man after the likeness of Anu.
 Aruru washed her hands, took a bit of clay, and cast it on the ground.
 Thus she created Enkidu, the hero, as if he were born of Ninurta (god of war and hunting).
 His whole body was covered with hair; he had long hair on his head like a woman; 45
 His flowing hair was luxuriant like that of the corn-god.
 He ate herbs with the gazelles.
 He quenched his thirst with the beasts.
 He sported about with the creatures of the water.

Then did a hunter, a trapper, come face to face with this fellow, 50
 Came on him one, two, three days, at the place where the beasts drank water.
 But when he saw him the hunter's face looked troubled
 As he beheld Enkidu, and he returned to his home with his cattle.
 He was sad, and moaned, and wailed;

His heart grew heavy, his face became clouded, 55
And sadness entered his mind.
The hunter opened his mouth and said, addressing his father:
“Father, there is a great fellow come forth from out of the mountains,
His strength is the greatest the length and breadth of the country,
Like to a double of Anu’s own self, his strength is enormous, 60
Ever he ranges at large over the mountains, and ever with cattle
Grazes on herbage and ever he sets his foot to the water,
So that I fear to approach him. The pits which I myself hollowed
With my own hands he has filled in again, and the traps that I set
Are torn up, and out of my clutches he has helped all the cattle escape, 65
And the beasts of the desert: to work at my fieldcraft, or hunt, he will not allow me.”

His father opened his mouth and said, addressing the hunter:
“Gilgamesh dwells in Uruk, my son, whom no one has vanquished,
It is his strength that is the greatest the length and breadth of the country, 70
Like to a double of Anu’s own self, his strength is enormous,
Go, set your face towards Uruk: and when he hears of a monster,
He will say ‘Go, O hunter, and take with you a courtesan-girl, a hetaera (a sacred temple girl from Eanna, the temple
of Ishtar).

When he gathers the cattle again in their drinking place, 75
So shall she put off her mantle, the charm of her beauty revealing;
Then he shall see her, and in truth will embrace her, and thereafter his cattle,
With which he was reared, with straightaway forsake him.”



IMAGE 1.8: GILGAMESH STATUE | This statue of Gilgamesh depicts him in his warrior’s outfit, holding a lion cub under one arm.

Author: User “zayzayem”
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The hunter listened to the advice of his father and straightaway
 He went to Gilgamesh, taking the road towards Uruk.
 To Gilgamesh he came, and addressed his speech to him, saying: 80
 “There is a great fellow come forth from out of the mountains,
 His strength is the greatest the length and breadth of the country,
 Like to a double of Anu’s own self, his strength is enormous,
 Ever he ranges at large over the mountains, and ever with cattle
 Grazes on herbage and ever he sets his foot to the water, 85
 So that I fear to approach him. The pits which I myself hollowed
 With mine own hands he has filled in again, and the traps that I set
 Are torn up, and out of my clutches he has helped all the cattle escape,
 And the beasts of the desert: to work at my fieldcraft, or hunt, he will not allow me.”

Gilgamesh made this answer to the hunter: 90

“Go, O hunter, and take with you a courtesan-girl, a hetaera from Ishtar’s temple.

When he gathers the cattle again in their drinking place,
 So shall she put off her mantle, the charm of her beauty revealing;
 Then he shall see her, and in truth will embrace her, and thereafter his cattle,
 With which he was reared, with straightaway forsake him.” 95

Forth went the hunter, took with him a courtesan-girl, a hetaera, the woman Shamhat;
 Together they proceeded straightway, and
 On the third day they reached the appointed field.
 There the hunter and the hetaera rested.
 One day, two days, they lurked at the entrance to the well, 100
 Where the cattle were accustomed to slake their thirst,
 Where the creatures of the waters were sporting.
 Then came Enkidu, whose home was the mountains,
 Who with gazelles ate herbs,
 And with the cattle slaked his thirst, 105
 And with the creatures of the waters rejoiced his heart.
 And Shamhat beheld him.

“Behold, there he is,” the hunter exclaimed; “now reveal your body,
 Uncover your nakedness, and let him enjoy your favors.
 Be not ashamed, but yield to his sensuous lust. 110
 He shall see you and shall approach you;
 Remove your garment, and he shall lie in your arms;
 Satisfy his desire after the manner of women;
 Then his cattle, raised with him on the field, shall forsake him
 While he firmly presses his breast on yours.” 115
 And Shamhat revealed her body, uncovered her nakedness,
 And let him enjoy her favors.
 She was not ashamed, but yielded to his sensuous lust.
 She removed her garment, he lay in her arms,
 And she satisfied his desire after the manner of women. 120
 He pressed his breast firmly upon hers.
 For six days and seven nights Enkidu enjoyed the love of Shamhat.
 And when he had sated himself with her charms,
 He turned his face toward his cattle.
 The gazelles, resting, beheld Enkidu; they and 125
 The cattle of the field turned away from him.
 This startled Enkidu and his body grew faint;
 His knees became stiff, as his cattle departed,
 And he became less agile than before.

And as he realized what had happened, he came to a decision. 130
 He turned again, in love enthralled, to the feet of the temple girl,
 And gazed up into the face of Shamhat.
 And while she spoke, his ears listened attentively;
 And Shmahat spoke to Enkidu and said:
 “You are magnificent, Enkidu, you shall be like a god; 135
 Why, then, do you lie down with the beasts of the field?
 Come, I will take you to strong-walled Uruk;
 To the glorious house, the dwelling of Anu and Ishtar,
 The palace of Gilgamesh, the hero who is perfect in strength,
 Surpassing, like a mountain bull, men in power.” 140
 While she spoke this way to him, he listened to her wise speech.
 And Enkidu spoke to her, the temple girl:
 “Come then, Shamhat, take me, and lead me
 To the glorious dwelling, the sacred seat of Anu and Ishtar,
 To the palace of Gilgamesh, the hero who is perfect in strength, 145
 Surpassing, like as a mountain bull, men in power. I will challenge him.”

Shamhat warned Enkidu, saying:
 “You will see Gilgamesh.
 I have seen his face; it glows with heroic courage.
 Strength he possesses, magnificent is his whole body. 150
 His power is stronger than yours.
 He rests not nor tires, neither by day nor by night.
 O Enkidu, change your intention.
 Shamash loves Gilgamesh;
 Anu and Ea are whispering wisdom into his ear. 155
 Before you come down from the mountain
 Gilgamesh will have seen you in a dream in Uruk.”

[Gilgamesh had a dream and was troubled because he could not interpret it.]

Gilgamesh came, to understand the dream, and said to his mother:

“My mother, I dreamed a dream in my nightly vision;
 The stars of heaven, like Anu’s host, fell upon me. 160
 Although I wrestled him, he was too strong for me, and even though I loosed his hold on me,
 I was unable to shake him off of me: and now, all the meanwhile,
 People from Uruk were standing around him.
 My own companions were kissing his feet; and I to my breast like a woman did hold him,
 Then I presented him low at your feet, that as my own equal you might recognize him.” 165
 She who knows all wisdom answered her son;
 “The stars of the heavens represent your comrades,
 That which was like unto Anu’s own self, which fell on your shoulders,
 Which you did wrestle, but he was too strong for you, even though you loosed his hold on you,
 But you were unable to shake him off of you, 170
 So you presented him low at my feet, that as your own equal
 I might recognize him—and you to your breast like a woman did hold him:

This is a stout heart, a friend, one ready to stand by a comrade,
 One whose strength is the greatest, the length and breadth of the country,
 Like to a double of Anu’s own self, his strength is enormous. 175
 Now, since you to your breast did hold him the way you would a woman,
 This is a sign that you are the one he will never abandon:
 This is the meaning of your dream.”
 Again he spoke to his mother,
 “Mother, a second dream did I see: Into Uruk, the high-walled, 180

Hurtled an axe, and they gathered about it:
 People were standing about it, the people all thronging before it,
 Artisans pressing behind it, while I at your feet did present it,
 I held it to me like a woman, that you might recognize it as my own equal.”
 She the all-wise, who knows all wisdom, thus answered her offspring: 185
 “That axe you saw is a man; like a woman did you hold him,
 Against your breast, that as your own equal I might recognize him;
 This is a stout heart, a friend, one ready to stand by a comrade; He will never abandon you.”

[Meanwhile, Shamhat helps Enkidu adjust to living among humans.]

Then Shamhat spoke to Enkidu:
 “As I view you, even like a god, O Enkidu, you are, 190
 Why with the beasts of the field did you ever roam through the wilderness?
 I’ll lead you to Uruk broad-marketed, yes, to the Temple
 Sacred, the dwelling of Anu—O Enkidu, come, so that I may guide you,
 To Eanna, the dwelling of Anu, where Gilgamesh lives,
 He, the supreme of creation; and you will embrace him, 195
 And even as yourself you shall love him.
 O, get up from the ground—which is a shepherd’s bed only.”
 He heard what she said, welcomed her advice: the advice of the woman struck home.
 She took off one length of cloth wherewith she might clothe him: the other she herself wore,

And so, holding his hand like a brother, she led him 200
 To the huts of the shepherds, the place of the sheepfolds. The shepherds
 Gathered at the sight of him.

He in the past was accustomed to suck the milk of the wild things!
 Bread which she set before him he broke, but he gazed and he stared:
 Enkidu did not know how to eat bread, nor had he the knowledge to drink mead! 205
 Then the woman made answer, to Enkidu speaking,
 “Enkidu, taste of the bread, for it is life; in truth, the essential of life;
 Drink also of the mead, which is the custom of the country.”

Enkidu ate the bread, ate until he was gorged,
 Drank of the mead seven cups; his spirits rose, and he was exultant, 210
 Glad was his heart, and cheerful his face:
 He anointed himself with oil: and thus became human.
 He put on a garment to be like a man and taking his weapons,
 He hunted the lions, which harried the shepherds all the nights, and he caught the jackals.
 He, having mastered the lions, let the shepherds sleep soundly. 215
 Enkidu—he was their guardian—became a man of full vigor.

Enkidu saw a man passing by, and when he observed the fellow,
 He said to the woman: “Shamhat, bring me this fellow,
 Where is he going? I would know his intention.”
 Shamhat called to the man to come to them, asking: “O, what are you seeking, Sir?” 220
 The man spoke, addressing them:

“I am going, then, to heap up the offerings such as are due to the city of Uruk;
 Come with me, and on behalf of the common good bring in the food of the city.
 You will see Gilgamesh, king of broad-marketed Uruk;
 After the wedding, he sleeps first with the bride, his birthright, before the husband.” 225
 So, at the words of the fellow, they went with him to Uruk.

Enkidu, going in front with the temple girl coming behind him,
 Entered broad-marketed Uruk; the populace gathered behind him,

Then, as he stopped in the street of broad-marketed Uruk, the people
 Thronging behind him exclaimed “Of a truth, like to Gilgamesh is he,
 Shorter in stature, but his composition is stronger.” 230

Strewn is the couch for the love-rites, and Gilgamesh now in the night-time
 Comes to sleep, to delight in the woman, but Enkidu, standing
 There in the street, blocks the passage to Gilgamesh, threatening
 Gilgamesh with his strength. 235

Gilgamesh shows his rage, and he rushed to attack him: they met in the street.
 Enkidu barred up the door with his foot, and to Gilgamesh denied entry.

They grappled and snorted like bulls, and the threshold of the door
 Shattered: the very wall quivered as Gilgamesh with Enkidu grappled and wrestled.

Gilgamesh bent his leg to the ground [pinning Enkidu]: so his fury abated,
 And his anger was quelled: Enkidu thus to Gilgamesh spoke: 240

“Of a truth, did your mother (Ninsun, the wild cow goddess) bear you,
 And only you: that choicest cow of the steer-folds,
 Ninsun exalted you above all heroes, and Enlil has given
 You the kingship over men.” 245

[The next part of the story is lost on a broken part of the tablet. When the story resumes, time has passed, and Gilgamesh and Enkidu are now friends. Enkidu is grieving the loss of a woman: possibly Shamhat leaving him, possibly another woman who has died.]

Enkidu there as he stood listened to Gilgamesh’s words, grieving,
 Sitting in sorrow: his eyes filled with tears, and his arms lost their power,
 His body had lost its strength. Each clasped the hand of the other.
 Holding on to each other like brothers, and Enkidu answered Gilgamesh:
 “Friend, my darling has circled her arms around my neck to say goodbye,
 Which is why my arms lose their power, my body has lost its strength.” 250

[Gilgamesh decides to distract his friend with a quest.]

Gilgamesh opened his mouth, and to Enkidu he spoke in this way:
 “I, my friend, am determined to go to the Forest of Cedars,
 Humbaba the Fierce lives there, I will overcome and destroy what is evil,
 Then will I cut down the Cedar trees.” 255

Enkidu opened his mouth, and to Gilgamesh he spoke in this way,
 “Know, then, my friend, that when I was roaming with the animals in the mountains
 I marched for a distance of two hours from the skirts of the Forest
 Into its depths. Humbaba—his roar was a whirlwind,
 Flame in his jaws, and his very breath Death! O, why have you desired
 To accomplish this? To meet with Humbaba would be an unequal conflict.” 260

Gilgamesh opened his mouth and to Enkidu he spoke in this way:
 “It is because I need the rich resources of its mountains that I go to the Forest.”

Enkidu opened his mouth and to Gilgamesh he spoke in this way:
 “But when we go to the Forest of Cedars, you will find that its guard is a fighter,
 Strong, never sleeping. O Gilgamesh, 265

So that he can safeguard the Forest of Cedars, making it a terror to mortals,
 Enlil has appointed him—Humbaba, his roar is a whirlwind,
 Flame in his jaws, and his very breath Death! Yes, if he hears but a tread in the Forest,
 Hears but a tread on the road, he roars—‘Who is this come down to his Forest?’ 270

And terrible consequences will seize him who comes down to his Forest.”

Gilgamesh opened his mouth and to Enkidu he spoke in this way:
 “Who, O my friend, is unconquered by death? A god, certainly,
 Lives forever in the daylight, but mortals—their days are all numbered,
 All that they do is but wind—But since you are now dreading death, 275
 Offering nothing of your courage—I, I’ll be your protector, marching in front of you!
 Your own mouth shall tell others that you feared the onslaught of battle,
 Whereas I, if I should fall, will have established my name forever.
 It was Gilgamesh who fought with Humbaba, the Fierce!
 In the future, after my children are born to my house, and climb up into your lap, saying: 280
 ‘Tell us all that you know,’ [what shall you say]?

When you talk this way, you make me long for the Cedars even more;
 I am determined to cut them down, so that I may gain fame everlasting.”

Gilgamesh spoke again to Enkidu, saying:

“Now, O my friend, I must give my orders to the craftsmen, 285
 So that they cast in our presence our weapons.”
 They delivered the orders to the craftsmen: the mold did the workmen prepare, and the axes
 Monstrous they cast: yes, the axes did they cast, each weighing three talents;
 Glaives, too, monstrous they cast, with hilts each weighing two talents,
 Blades, thirty manas to each, corresponding to fit them: the inlay, 290
 Gold thirty manas each sword: so were Gilgamesh and Enkidu laden
 Each with ten talents of weight.

And now in the Seven Bolt Portal of Uruk
 Hearing the noise did the artisans gather, assembled the people,
 There in the streets of broad-marketed Uruk, in Gilgamesh’s honor, 295
 So did the Elders of Uruk the broad-marketed take seat before him.
 Gilgamesh spoke thus: “O Elders of Uruk the broad-marketed, hear me!
 I go against Humbaba, the Fierce, who shall say, when he hears that I am coming,

‘Ah, let me look on this Gilgamesh, he of whom people are speaking,
 He with whose fame the countries are filled’—’Then I will overwhelm him, 300
 There in the Forest of Cedars—I’ll make the land hear it,
 How like a giant the hero of Uruk is—yes, for I am determined to cut down the Cedars
 So that I may gain fame everlasting.”

To Gilgamesh the Elders of Uruk the broad-marketed gave this answer:
 “Gilgamesh, it is because you are young that your valor makes you too confident, 305
 Nor do you know to the full what you seek to accomplish.
 News has come to our ears of Humbaba, who is twice the size of a man.
 Who of free will then would seek to oppose him or encounter his weapons?
 Who would march for two hours from the skirts of the Forest
 Into its depths? Humbaba, his roar is a whirlwind, 310
 Flame is in his jaws, and his very breath is Death! O, why have you desired to accomplish this?
 To fight with Humbaba would be an unequal conflict.”

Gilgamesh listened to the advice of his counselors and pondered,
 Then cried out to his friend: “Now, indeed, O my friend, will I voice my opinion.
 In truth, I dread him, and yet into the depths of the Forest I will go.” 315

And the Elders spoke:

“Gilgamesh, put not your faith in the strength of your own person solely,
 And do not trust your fighting skills too much.
 Truly, he who walks in front is able to safeguard a comrade,

Your guide will guard you; so, let Enkidu walk in front of you, 320
 For he knows the road to the Forest of Cedars;
 He lusts for battle, and threatens combat.
 Enkidu—he would watch over a friend, would safeguard a comrade,
 Yes, such a man would deliver his friend from out of the pitfalls.
 We, O King, in our conclave have paid close attention to your welfare; 325
 You, O King, shall pay attention to us in return.”
 Gilgamesh opened his mouth and spoke to Enkidu, saying:
 “To the Palace of Splendor, O friend, come, let us go,
 To the presence of Ninsun, the glorious Queen, yes, to Ninsun,
 Wisest of all clever women, all-knowing; she will tell us how to proceed.” 330

They joined hands and went to the Palace of Splendor,
 Gilgamesh and Enkidu. To the glorious Queen, yes, to Ninsun
 Gilgamesh came, and he entered into her presence:
 “Ninsun, I want you to know that I am going on a long journey,
 To the home of Humbaba to encounter a threat that is unknown, 335
 To follow a road which I know not, which will be new from the time of my starting,
 Until my return, until I arrive at the Forest of Cedars,
 Until I overthrow Humbaba, the Fierce, and destroy him.
 The Sun god abhors all evil things, Shamash hates evil; Ask him to help us.”

So Ninsun listened to her offspring, to Gilgamesh, 340

Entered her chamber and decked herself with the flowers of *Tulal*,
 Put the festival clothes on her body,
 Put on the festival adornments of her bosom, her head with a circlet crowned,
 Climbed the stairway, ascended to the roof, and the parapet mounted,
 Offered her incense to Shamash, her sacrifice offered to Shamash, 345
 Then towards Shamash she lifted her hands in prayer, saying:
 “Why did you give this restlessness of spirit to Gilgamesh, my son?
 You gave him restlessness, and now he wants to go on a long journey
 To where Humbaba dwells, to encounter a threat that is unknown,
 To follow a road which he knows not, which will be new from the time of his starting, 350
 Until his return, until he arrives at the Forest of Cedars,
 Until he overthrows Humbaba, the Fierce, and destroys him.

You abhor all evil things; you hate evil. Remember my son when that day comes,
 When he faces Humbaba. May Aya, your bride, remind you of my son.”

Now Gilgamesh knelt before Shamash, to utter a prayer; tears streamed down his face: 355
 “Here I present myself, Shamash, to lift up my hands in entreaty
 That my life may be spared; bring me again to the ramparts of Uruk:
 Give me your protection. I will give you homage.”
 And Shamash made answer, speaking through his oracle.

[Although the next lines are missing, Shamash evidently gives his permission, so Gilgamesh and Enkidu get ready for their journey.]

The artisans brought monstrous axes, they delivered the bow and the quiver 360
 Into his hand; so, taking an ax, he slung on his quiver,
 He fastened his glaive to his baldrick.
 But before the two of them set forth on their journey, they offered
 Gifts to the Sun god, that he might bring them home to Uruk in safety.

Now the Elders give their blessings, to Gilgamesh giving 365
 Counsel concerning the road: “O Gilgamesh, do not trust to your own power alone,

Guard yourself; let Enkidu walk in front of you for protection.
 He is the one who discovered the way, the road he has traveled.
 Truly, all the paths of the Forest are under the watchful eye of Humbaba.
 May the Sun god grant you success to attain your ambition, 370
 May he level the path that is blocked, cleave a road through the forest for you to walk.
 May the god Lugalbanda bring dreams to you, ones that shall make you glad,
 So that they help you achieve your purpose, for like a boy
 You have fixed your mind to the overthrow of Humbaba.

When you stop for the night, dig a well, so that the water in your skin-bottle 375
 Will be pure, will be cool;
 Pour out an offering of water to the Sun god, and do not forget Lugalbanda.”

Gilgamesh drew his mantle around his shoulders,
 And they set forth together on the road to Humbaba.
 Every forty leagues they took a meal; 380
 Every sixty leagues they took a rest.
 Gilgamesh walked to the summit and poured out his offering for the mountain:
 “Mountain, grant me a dream. . .”
 The mountain granted him a dream. . .
 Then a chill gust of wind made him sway like the corn of the mountains; 385
 Straightaway, sleep that flows on man descended upon him: at midnight
 He suddenly ended his slumber and hurried to speak to his comrade:
 “Didn’t you call me, O friend? Why am I awakened from slumber?
 Didn’t you touch me—or has some spirit passed by me? Why do I tremble?”
 [Gilgamesh’s dream is terrifying, but Enkidu interprets it to mean that Shamash will help them defeat Humbaba.
 This process is repeated several times. Eventually, they arrive at the huge gate that guards the Cedar Forest.]
 Enkidu lifted his eyes and spoke to the Gate as if it were human: 390
 “O Gate of the Forest, I for the last forty leagues have admired your wonderful timber,
 Your wood has no peer in other countries;
 Six *gar* your height, and two *gar* your breadth . . .
 O, if I had but known, O Gate, of your grandeur,
 Then I would lift an ax...[basically, I would have brought a bigger ax]. 395
 [The heroes force the gate open.]
 They stood and stared at the Forest, they gazed at the height of the Cedars,
 Scanning the paths into the Forest: and where Humbaba walked
 Was a path: paths were laid out and well kept.
 They saw the cedar hill, the dwelling of gods, the sanctuary of Ishtar.
 In front of the hill a cedar stood of great splendor, 400
 Fine and good was its shade, filling the heart with gladness.
 [From his words below, Humbaba must have taunted the heroes at this point, and Gilgamesh is preparing to attack
 Humbaba.]
 The Sun god saw Gilgamesh through the branches of the Cedar trees:
 Gilgamesh prayed to the Sun god for help.
 The Sun god heard the entreaty of Gilgamesh,
 And against Humbaba he raised mighty winds: yes, a great wind, 405
 Wind from the North, a wind from the South, a tempest and storm wind,
 Chill wind, and whirlwind, a wind of all harm: eight winds he raised,
 Seizing Humbaba from the front and the back, so that he could not go forwards,
 Nor was he able to go back: and then Humbaba surrendered.
 Humbaba spoke to Gilgamesh this way: “O Gilgamesh, I pray you, 410
 Stay now your hand: be now my master, and I’ll be your henchman:
 Disregard all the words which I spoke so boastfully against you.”
 Then Enkidu spoke to Gilgamesh: “Of the advice which Humbaba
 Gives to you—you cannot risk accepting it.
 Humbaba must not remain alive.” 420
 [The section where they debate what to do is missing, but several versions have the end result.]

They cut off the head of Humbaba and left the corpse to be devoured by vultures.

[They return to Uruk after cutting down quite a few cedar trees.]

Gilgamesh cleansed his weapons, he polished his arms.

He took off the armor that was upon him. He put away

His soiled garments and put on clean clothes;

He covered himself with his ornaments, put on his baldrick. 425

Gilgamesh placed upon his head the crown.

To win the favor and love of Gilgamesh, Ishtar, the lofty goddess, desired him and said:

“Come, Gilgamesh, be my spouse,

Give, O give to me your manly strength.

Be my husband, let me be your wife, 430

And I will set you in a chariot embossed with precious stones and gold,

With wheels made of gold, and shafts of sapphires.

Large kudanu-lions you shall harness to it.

Under sweet-smelling cedars you shall enter into our house.

And when you enter into our house 435

You shall sit upon a lofty throne, and people shall kiss your feet;

Kings and lords and rulers shall bow down before you.

Whatever the mountain and the countryside produces, they shall bring to you as tribute.

Your sheep shall bear twin-ewes.

You shall sit upon a chariot that is splendid, 440

drawn by a team that has no equal.”

Gilgamesh opened his mouth in reply, said to Lady Ishtar:

“Yes, but what could I give you, if I should take you in marriage?

I could provide you with oils for your body, and clothing: also,

I could give you bread and other foods: there must be enough sustenance 445

Fit for divinity—I, too, must give you a drink fit for royalty.

What, then, will be my advantage, supposing I take you in marriage?

You are but a ruin that gives no shelter to man from the weather,

You are but a back door that gives no resistance to blast or to windstorm,

You are but a palace that collapses on the heroes within it, 450

You are but a pitfall with a covering that gives way treacherously,

You are but pitch that defiles the man who carries it,

You are but a bottle that leaks on him who carries it,

You are but limestone that lets stone ramparts fall crumbling in ruin.

You are but a sandal that causes its owner to trip. 455

Who was the husband you faithfully loved for all time?

Who was your lord who gained the advantage over you?

Come, and I will tell you the endless tale of your husbands.

Where is your husband Tammuz, who was to be forever?

Well, I will tell you plainly the dire result of your behavior. 460

To Tammuz, the husband of your youth,

You caused weeping and brought grief upon him every year.

[She sent Tammuz to the Underworld in her place, not telling him that he would only be able to return in the spring, like Persephone/Proserpina.]

The allallu-bird, so bright of colors, you loved;

But its wing you broke and crushed,

so that now it sits in the woods crying: ‘O my wing!’ 465

You also loved a lion, powerful in his strength;

Seven and seven times did you dig a snaring pit for him.

You also loved a horse, pre-eminent in battle,

But with bridle, spur, and whip you forced it on,

Forced it to run seven double-leagues at a stretch. 470

And when it was tired and wanted to drink, you still forced it on,