

A scroll of aged, yellowish parchment is laid flat on a dark wooden surface. The parchment has a slightly textured appearance and some minor discoloration. The title 'MESOPOTAMIAN MYTHOLOGY' is written in a bold, red, serif font, centered on the scroll. The scroll is partially unrolled, with the edges of the parchment visible on the left and right sides.

MESOPOTAMIAN  
MYTHOLOGY



➤ **The myths, epics, hymns, lamentations, penitential psalms, incantations, wisdom literature, and handbooks dealing with rituals and omens of ancient Mesopotamian.**





**The literature that has survived from Mesopotamian was written primarily on stone or clay tablets. The production and preservation of written documents were the responsibility of scribes who were associated with the temples and the palace. A sharp distinction cannot be made between religious and secular writings.**



**The function of the temple as a food redistribution center meant that even seemingly secular shipping receipts had a religious aspect. In a similar manner, laws were perceived as given by the gods. Accounts of the victories of the kings often were associated with the favor of the gods and written in praise of the gods. The gods were also involved in the established and enforcement of treaties between political powers of the day. A large group of texts related to the interpretations of omens has survived. Because it was felt that the will of the gods could be known through the signs that the gods revealed, care was taken to collect ominous signs and the events which they preached. If the signs were carefully observed, negative future events could be prevented by the performance of appropriate apotropaic rituals.**





## Shumma Izbu

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**Among the more prominent of the Texts are the shumma izbu texts (“if a fetus...”) which observe the birth of malformed young of both animals and humans. Later a similar series of texts observed the physical characteristics of any person. There are also omen observations to guide the physician in the diagnosis and treatment of patients.**





**Significant in the  
Babylonian new  
year festival was  
the reading of the  
creation Epic,  
entitled Enuma Elish.**







**The Enuma Elish (also known as The Seven Tablets of Creation) is the Mesopotamian creation myth whose title is derived from the opening lines of the piece, "When on High". All of the tablets containing the myth, found at Ashur, Kish, Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh, Sultantepe, and other excavated sites, date to c. 1100 BCE but their colophons indicate that these are all copies of a much older version of the myth. As Marduk, the champion of the young gods in their war against Tiamat, is of Babylonian origin, the Sumerian Ea/Enki or Enlil is thought to have played the major role in the original version of the story. The copy found at Ashur has the god Ashur in the main role as was the custom of the cities of Mesopotamia. The god of each city was always considered the best and most powerful. Marduk, the god of Babylon, only figures as prominently as he does in the story because most of the copies found are from Babylonian scribes. Even so, Ea does still play an important part in the Babylonian version of the Enuma Elish by creating human beings.**



In the beginning there was only undifferentiated water swirling in chaos. Out of this swirl, the waters divided into sweet, fresh water, known as the **god Apsu**



and salty bitter water, the **goddess Tiamat.**





**Once differentiated, the union of these two entities gave birth to the younger gods.**



**Anshar**



**Kishar**



**Ea**



**These young gods, however, were extremely loud, troubling the sleep of Apsu at night and distracting him from his work by day. Upon the advice of his Vizier, Mummu, Apsu decides to kill the younger gods. Tiamat, hearing of their plan, warns her eldest son, Enki (sometimes Ea) and he puts Apsu to sleep and kills him. From Apsu's remains, Enki creates his home. Tiamat, once the supporter of the younger gods, now is enraged that they have killed her mate. She consults with the god, Quingu, who advises her to make war on the younger gods. Tiamat rewards Quingu with the Tablets of Destiny, which legitimize the rule of a god and control the fates, and he wears them proudly as a breastplate. With Quingu as her champion, Tiamat summons the forces of chaos and creates eleven horrible monsters to destroy her children. Ea, Enki, and the younger gods fight against Tiamat futilely until, from among them, emerges the champion Marduk who swears he will defeat Tiamat. Marduk defeats Quingu and kills Tiamat by shooting her with an arrow which splits her in two; from her eyes flow the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Out of Tiamat's corpse, Marduk creates the heavens and the earth, he appoints gods to various duties and binds Tiamat's eleven creatures to his feet as trophies (to much adulation from the other gods) before setting their images in his new home. He also takes the Tablets of Destiny from Quingu, thus legitimizing his reign.**



**After the gods have finished praising him for his great victory and the art of his creation, Marduk consults with the god Ea (the god of wisdom) and decides to create human beings from the remains of whichever of the gods instigated Tiamat to war. Quingu is charged as guilty and killed and, from his blood, Ea creates Lullu, the first man, to be a helper to the gods in their eternal task of maintaining order and keeping chaos at bay. As the poem phrases it, "Ea created mankind/On whom he imposed the service of the gods, and set the gods free." Following this, Marduk "arranged the organization of the netherworld" and distributed the gods to their appointed stations. The poem ends in Tablet VII with long praise of Marduk for his accomplishments.**

**The Enuma Elish was read and recited widely throughout Mesopotamia but was especially important at the New Year Festival in Babylon. During this festival the statue of Marduk would be taken from the temple and, amidst the revelers, be paraded through the streets of the city, out the gates, to 'vacation' in a small house built for this purpose. The Enuma Elish, especially, it is thought, the praise from Tablet VII, would be sung or chanted during this procession.**



**Anshar**



**- The Babylonian god Anshar is the son of Tiamat and Apsu, brother and husband of Kishar**

**Anu (An)**



**- The son of Anshar and Kishar. He is the chief god of the Great Triad, with Ea and Enlil. In Sumerian mythology, he was the god of sky, husband of Nintu (Ki), and the father and ruler of all gods. One of four Sumerian creating gods.**

**Apsu**



**- The Babylonian god Apsu is Tiamat's husband, the ruler of gods and underworld oceans. Father of Lahmu, Lahamu, Anshar and Kishar. Ea killed him**



**Damkina**



- **Damkina is the Babylonian earth mother goddess, the wife of Ea and mother of Marduk.**

**Ea**



- **The Babylonian god Ea is the son of Anu and husband of Damkina, father of Marduk, god of wisdom, arts and crafts. Ea is the ruler of all gods after Apsu. In the Great Triad, Ea is the third with Anu and Enlil. In the Sumerian pantheon, Ea is the son of Nintu.**

**Enli**



- **Enlil is the Babylonian god of the air between earth and sky. In Sumerian mythology he was the son of An and Nintu, the god of air and agriculture, and eventually co-ruler of the gods along with Anu. One of four Sumerian creating gods.**



**Ishtar (Inanna)**



- Inanna is a great goddess, the goddess of love and war. She descended to the Underworld to try to regain her lover.

**Kingu (Qingu)**



- Kingu is a dragon commander of Tiamat's forces against Marduk. Kingu is the counterpart of the sky god Anu on the side of darkness. He may have been Tiamat's second husband. Ea fashioned humans from his blood when Kingu was ordered to be sacrificed.

**Kishar**



- The Babylonian goddess Kishar is the daughter of Tiamat and Apsu, sister and wife of Anshar.



**Marduk**



- Son of Ea and Damkina, the wisest of the gods and eventually their ruler, Marduk is the Babylonian counterpart of the Sumerian Anu and Enlil. Nabu is Marduk's son.

Marduk is a Babylonian creator god who defeats an earlier generation of water gods to form and populate the earth, according to the earliest written creation epic, the Enuma Elish

**Mummu (Mommu)**



- The Babylonian god Mummu is the son of Tiamat and Anu or their chamberlain/intermediary. He is the god of mist and a craftsman god.

**Nintu (Ki)**



- A great Sumerian goddess, wife of Anu and mother of all gods, she created humans from clay. One of four Sumerian creating gods. Nintu is a goddess of childbirth (Lady of Birth).



**Shamash**



**- Son of Sin, god of the sun who protects the poor and travelers.**

**Sin**



**- Moon god and the father of Shamash; counterpart of the Sumerian Nanna.**

**Tiamat**



**- Tiamat is the Babylonian Great Goddess, counterpart of Sumerian Nintu. Primeval chaos. Destroyed by her children to create the world.**



# The Epic of Gilgamesh









**Tablet V of the Epic of Gilgamesh**

**Tablet 11**





**Gilgamesh is the semi-mythic King of Uruk best known from The Epic of Gilgamesh (written c. 2150-1400 BCE) the great Sumerian/Babylonian poetic work which pre-dates Homer's writing by 1500 years and, therefore, stands as the oldest piece of epic Western literature. Gilgamesh's father was the Priest-King Lugalbanda (who is featured in two poems concerning his magical abilities which pre-date Gilgamesh) and his mother the goddess Ninsun (the Holy Mother and Great Queen) and, accordingly, Gilgamesh was a demi-god who was said to have lived an exceptionally long life (The Sumerian King List records his reign as 126 years) and to be possessed of super-human strength.**







*The end!*