

# Sumerian Mythology FAQ (Version 2.0html)

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This FAQ used to be posted on the third of every month to alt.mythology. An older text copy of this FAQ is available via anonymous ftp pending \*.answers approval at:

rtfm.mit.edu at /pub/usenet/news.answers/mythology/sumer-faq

last changes: July 27, 2000: complete revision including incorporating Kramer's *Sumerian Mythology* and Black & Green's *God's Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*. Added more citations of sources.

July 19, 1999: modified first sentence to include hints of civilization prior to and outside of Sumer

September 20, 1998: fleshed out the Gilgamesh entry

July 3, 1998: added a couple of Lilith links to Renee Rosen's and Alan Humm's sites.

August 13, 1997: added much more historical introductory material.

March 20, 1996: cleaned up some misleading references to Kur.

March 1, 1996: added the reference to Adapa's dictionary.

Feb 3, 1996: fixed a formatting problem in the sources area and added the full title "Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Underworld" to the Biblical ref's section.

Nov 13, 1995: fixed a couple of problems with some internal links.

Nov 2, 1995: added some short notes about the primary deities, Ninhursag, and the Dilmun/Eden parallel to clarify some issues.

October 6th, 1995: added a link to the "dictionary" and brief reviews of the sources and other relevant books.

September 1995: moved page to pubpages server

March 25th 1995: header of Usenet version reformatted for \*.answers; changed URL to home address; small changes to Inanna & Dumuzi

Adapa (Dan Sullivan) has constructed a more complete Sumerian-English dictionary at:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~duranki/index1.html#dict> (Restored! 5/13/99)

John Halloran has a Sumerian Language Page at:

<http://www.sumerian.org/>

I have constructed a rudimentary Sumerian-English, English Sumerian [glossary](#) using Kramer's *The Sumerians* and Jacobsen's *Treasures of Darkness*, although parties interested in the Sumerian language may be better served at the prior two pages. note: This FAQ is partly based on an anthropology paper which I wrote in 1992, using some of the sources detailed below.

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## I. History and Overview -

Sumer may very well be the first civilization in the world (although long term settlements at Jericho and [Çatal Hüyük](#) predate Sumer and examples of writing from Egypt and the Harappa, Indus valley sites *may* predate those from Sumer). From its beginnings as a collection of farming villages around 5000 BCE, through its conquest by Sargon of Agade around 2370 BCE and its final collapse under the Amorites around 2000 BCE, the Sumerians developed a religion and a society which influenced both their neighbors and their conquerors. Sumerian cuneiform, the earliest written language, was borrowed by the Babylonians, who also took many of their religious beliefs. In fact, traces and parallels of Sumerian myth can be found in Genesis.

### History

Sumer was a collection of city states around the Lower Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is now southern Iraq. Each of these cities had individual rulers, although as early as the mid-fourth millennium BCE the leader of the dominant city could have been considered the king of the region. The history of Sumer tends to be divided into five periods. They are the Uruk period, which saw the dominance of the city of that same name, the Jemdat Nasr period, the Early Dynastic periods, the Agade period, and the Ur III period - the entire span lasting from 3800 BCE to around 2000 BCE. In addition, there is evidence of the Sumerians in the area both prior to the Uruk period and after the Ur III Dynastic period, but relatively little is known about the former age and the latter time period is most heavily dominated by the Babylonians.

The **Uruk** period, stretched from 3800 BCE to 3200 BCE. It is to this era that the Sumerian King Lists

ascribe the reigns of [Dumuzi](#) the shepherd, and the other antediluvian kings. After his reign Dumuzi was worshipped as the god of the spring grains. This time saw an enormous growth in urbanization such that Uruk probably had a population around 45,000 at the period's end. It was easily the largest city in the area, although the older cities of Eridu to the south and Kish to the north may have rivaled it. Irrigation improvements as well as a supply of raw materials for craftsmen provided an impetus for this growth. In fact, the city of [An](#) and [Inanna](#) also seems to have been at the heart of a trade network which stretched from what is now southern Turkey to what is now eastern Iran. In addition people were drawn to the city by the great temples there.

The Eanna of Uruk, a collection of temples dedicated to Inanna, was constructed at this time and bore many mosaics and frescoes. These buildings served civic as well as religious purposes, which was fitting as the en, or high priest, served as both the spiritual and temporal leader. The temples were places where craftsmen would practice their trades and where surplus food would be stored and distributed.

The **Jemdat Nasr** period lasted from 3200 BCE to 2900 BCE. It was not particularly remarkable and most adequately described as an extension and slowing down of the Uruk period. This is the period during which the great flood is supposed to have taken place. The Sumerians' account of the flood may have been based on a flooding of the Tigris, Euphrates, or both rivers onto their already marshy country.

The **Early Dynastic** period ran from 2900 BCE to 2370 BCE and it is this period for which we begin to have more reliable written accounts although some of the great kings of this era later evolved mythic tales about them and were deified. Kingship moved about 100 miles upriver and about 50 miles south of modern Baghdad to the city of Kish. One of the earlier kings in Kish was [Etana](#) who "stabilized all the lands" securing the First Dynasty of Kish and establishing rule over Sumer and some of its neighbors. Etana was later believed by the Babylonians to have rode to heaven on the back of a giant Eagle so that he could receive the "plant of birth" from Ishtar (their version of Inanna) and thereby produce an heir.

Meanwhile, in the south, the Dynasty of Erech was founded by Meskiaggasher, who, along with his successors, was termed the "son of Utu", the sun-god. Following three other kings, including another Dumuzi, the famous Gilgamesh took the throne of Erech around 2600 BCE and became involved in a power struggle for the region with the Kish Dynasts and with Mesannepadda, the founder of the Dynasty of Ur. While Gilgamesh became a demi-god, remembered in epic tales, it was Mesannepadda who was eventually victorious in this three-way power struggle, taking the by then traditional title of "King of Kish".

Although the dynasties of Kish and Erech fell by the wayside, Ur could not retain a strong hold over all of Sumer. The entire region was weakened by the struggle and individual city-states continued more or less independent rule. The rulers of Lagash declared themselves "Kings of Kish" around 2450 BCE, but failed to seriously control the region, facing several military challenges by the nearby Umma. Lugalzagesi, *ensi* or priest-king of Umma from around 2360-2335 BCE, razed Lagash, and conquered Sumer, declaring himself "king of Erech and the Land". Unfortunately for him, all of this strife made Sumer ripe for conquest by an outsider and Sargon of Agade seized that opportunity.

**Sargon** united both Sumer and the northern region of Akkad - from which Babylon would arise about four hundred years later - not very far from Kish. Evidence is sketchy, but he may have extended his realm from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus River. This unity would survive its founder by less than 40 years. He built the city of Agade and established an enormous court there and he had a new temple erected in Nippur. Trade from across his new empire and beyond swelled the city, making it the center of world culture for a brief time.

After Sargon's death, however, the empire was fraught with rebellion. Naram-Sin, Sargon's grandson and third successor, quelled the rebellions through a series of military successes, extending his realm. He declared himself 'King of the Four corners of the World' and had himself deified. His divine powers must have failed him as the Guti, a mountain people, razed Agade and deposed Naram-Sin, ending that dynasty.

After a few decades, the Guti presence became intolerable for the Sumerian leaders. Utuhegal of Uruk/Erech rallied a coalition army and ousted them. One of his lieutenants, Ur-Nammu, usurped his rule and established the **third Ur dynasty** around 2112 BCE. He consolidated his control by defeating a rival dynast in Lagash and soon gained control of all of the Sumerian city-states. He established the earliest known recorded law-codes and had constructed the great ziggurat of Ur, a kind of step-pyramid which stood over 60' tall and more than 200' wide. For the next century the Sumerians were extremely prosperous, but their society collapsed around 2000 BCE under the invading Amorites. A couple of city-states maintained their independence for a short while, but soon they and the rest of the Sumerians were absorbed into the rising empire of the Babylonians. (Crawford pp. 1-28; Kramer 1963 pp. 40-72)

## Culture

Seated along the Euphrates River, Sumer had a thriving agriculture and trade industry. Herds of sheep and goats and farms of grains and vegetables were held both by the temples and private citizens. Ships plied up and down the river and throughout the Persian gulf, carrying pottery and various processed goods and bringing back fruits and various raw materials from across the region, including cedars from the Levant.

Sumer was one of the first literate civilizations leaving many records of business transactions, and lessons from schools. They had strong armies, which with their chariots and phalanxes held sway over their less civilized neighbors (Kramer 1963, p. 74). Perhaps the most lasting cultural remnants of the Sumerians though, can be found in their religion.

## Religion

The religion of the ancient Sumerians has left its mark on the entire middle east. Not only are its temples and ziggurats scattered about the region, but the literature, cosmogony and rituals influenced their neighbors to such an extent that we can see echoes of Sumer in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition today. From these ancient temples, and to a greater extent, through cuneiform writings of hymns, myths,

lamentations, and incantations, archaeologists and mythographers afford the modern reader a glimpse into the religious world of the Sumerians.

Each city housed a temple that was the seat of a major god in the Sumerian pantheon, as the gods controlled the powerful forces which often dictated a human's fate. The city leaders had a duty to please the town's patron deity, not only for the good will of that god or goddess, but also for the good will of the other deities in the council of gods. The priesthood initially held this role, and even after secular kings ascended to power, the clergy still held great authority through the interpretation of omens and dreams. Many of the secular kings claimed divine right; Sargon of Agade, for example claimed to have been chosen by [Ishtar/Inanna](#). ([Crawford](#) 1991: 21-24)

The rectangular central shrine of the temple, known as a 'cella,' had a brick altar or offering table in front of a statue of the temple's deity. The cella was lined on its long ends by many rooms for priests and priestesses. These mud-brick buildings were decorated with cone geometrical mosaics, and the occasional fresco with human and animal figures. These temple complexes eventually evolved into towering ziggurats. ([Wolkstein & Kramer](#) 1983: 119)

The temple was staffed by priests, priestesses, musicians, singers, castrates and hierodules. Various public rituals, food sacrifices, and libations took place there on a daily basis. There were monthly feasts and annual, New Year celebrations. During the later, the king would be married to Inanna as the resurrected fertility god Dumuzi, whose exploits are dealt with below.

When it came to more private matters, a Sumerian remained devout. Although the gods preferred justice and mercy, they had also created evil and misfortune. A Sumerian had little that he could do about it. Judging from Lamentation records, the best one could do in times of duress would be to "plead, lament and wail, tearfully confessing his sins and failings." Their family god or city god might intervene on their behalf, but that would not necessarily happen. After all, man was created as a broken, labor saving, tool for the use of the gods and at the end of everyone's life, lay the underworld, a generally dreary place. ([Wolkstein & Kramer](#) 1983: pp.123-124)

## II. What do we know about Sumerian Cosmology?

From verses scattered throughout hymns and myths, one can compile a picture of the universe's (anki) creation according to the Sumerians. The primeval sea (abzu) existed before anything else and within that, the heaven (an) and the earth (ki) were formed. The boundary between heaven and earth was a solid (perhaps tin) vault, and the earth was a flat disk. Within the vault lay the gas-like 'lil', or atmosphere, the brighter portions therein formed the stars, planets, sun, and moon. ([Kramer](#), *The Sumerians* 1963: pp. 112-113) Each of the four major Sumerian deities is associated with one of these regions. [An](#), god of heaven, may have been the main god of the pantheon prior to 2500 BC., although his importance gradually waned. (Kramer 1963 p. 118) Ki is likely to be the original name of the earth goddess, whose name more often appears as [Ninhursag](#) (queen of the mountains), Ninmah (the exalted lady), or Nintu

(the lady who gave birth). It seems likely that these two were the progenitors of most of the gods.

According to "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld", in the first days all needed things were created. Heaven and earth were separated. An took Heaven, Enlil took the earth, Ereshkigal was carried off to the netherworld as a prize, and Enki sailed off after her.

### III. What Deities did they worship?

#### Nammu

Nammu is the Goddess of the watery abyss, the primeval sea. She may be the earliest of deities within Sumerian cosmology as she gave birth to heaven and earth. (Kramer 1961 p. 39) She is elsewhere described both as the mother of all the gods and as the wife of [An](#). (Kramer 1961 p. 114) She is [Enki](#)'s mother. She prompts him to create servants for the gods and is then directed by him on how, with the help of Nimmah/[Ninhursag](#) to create man. (Kramer 1963 p. 150; Kramer 1961 p. 70)

#### A. The Primary Deities

It is notable that the Sumerians themselves may not have grouped these four as a set and that the grouping has been made because of the observations of Sumerologists.

#### An

An, god of heaven, may have been the main god of the pantheon prior to 2500 BC., although his importance gradually waned. (Kramer 1963 p. 118) In the early days he carried off heaven, while [Enlil](#) carried away the earth. (Kramer 1961 p. 37-39) It seems likely that he and Ki/[Ninhursag](#) were the progenitors of most of the gods. although in one place [Nammu](#) is listed as his wife. (Kramer 1961 p. 114) Among his children and followers were the Anunnaki. (Kramer 1961 p. 53) His primary temple was in Erech. He and Enlil give various gods, goddesses, and kings their earthly regions of influence and their laws. (Kramer 1963 p. 124) Enki seats him at the first seat of the table in Nippur at the feast celebrating his new house in Eridu. (Kramer 1961 p. 63) He hears [Inanna's](#) complaint about Mount Ebih (Kur?), but discourages her from attacking it because of its fearsome power. (Kramer 1961 pp. 82-83) After the flood, he and Enlil make [Ziusudra](#) immortal and make him live in Dilmun. (Kramer 1961 p. 98) (See also [Anu](#).)

#### Ninhursag (Ki, Nimmah, Nintu)

Ki is likely to be the original name of the earth goddess, whose name more often appears as Ninhursag (queen of the mountains), Nimmah (the exalted lady), or Nintu (the lady who gave birth). (Kramer 1963 p. 122) Most often she is considered Enlil's sister, but in some traditions she is his spouse instead. (Jacobsen p.105) She was born, possibly as a unified cosmic mountain with [An](#), from [Nammu](#) and shortly thereafter, their union produced [Enlil](#). (Kramer 1961 p. 74) In the early days, as Ki, she was separated from heaven (An) and carried off by Enlil. (Kramer 1961 pp.

37-41) It seems likely that she and An were the progenitors of most of the gods. She later unites with Enlil and with the assistance of Enki they produce the world's plant and animal life. (Kramer 1961 p. 75)

### "Enki and Ninhursag"

In Dilmun, she (as Nintu) bears the goddess Ninsar from Enki, who in turn bears the goddess Ninkur, who in turn bears Uttu, goddess of plants. Uttu bore eight new trees from Enki. When he then ate Uttu's children, Ninhursag cursed him with eight wounds and disappears. After being persuaded by Enlil to undo her curse, she bore Enki eight new children which undid the wounds of the first ones. (Kramer 1963 pp. 147-149; Kramer 1961 pp. 54-59)

Enki seats her (as Nintu) on the big side of the table in Nippur at the feast celebrating his new house in Eridu. (Kramer 1961 p. 63)

### "Enki and Ninmah"

She is the mother goddess and, as Ninmah, assists in the creation of man. Enki, having been propted by Nammu to create servants for the gods, describes how Nammu and Ninmah will help fashion man from clay. Prior to getting to work, she and Enki drink overmuch at a feast. She then shapes six flawed versions of man from the heart of the clay over the Abzu, with Enki declaring their fates. Enki, in turn also creates a flawed man which is unable to eat. Ninmah appears to curse him for the failed effort. (Kramer 1963 pp. 149-151; Kramer 1961 pp. 69-72)

(See also [Aruru](#))

## Enlil

[An](#) and [Ki](#)'s union produced Enlil (Lord of 'lil'). Enlil was the air-god and leader of the pantheon from at least 2500 BC, when his temple Ekur in Nippur was the spiritual center of Sumer (Kramer 1961 p. 47). In the early days he separated and carried off the earth (Ki) while An carried off heaven. (Kramer 1961 p. 37-41) He assumed most of An's powers. He is glorified as "the father of the gods, 'the king of heaven and earth,' 'the king of all the lands'". Kramer portrays him as a patriarchal figure, who is both creator and disciplinarian. Enlil causes the dawn, the growth of plants, and bounty (Kramer 1961 p. 42). He also invents agricultural tools such as the plow or pickaxe (Kramer 1961 pp 47-49). Without his blessings, a city would not rise (Kramer 1961 pp. 63, 80) Most often he is considered Ninlil's husband, with Ninhursag as his sister, but some traditions have Ninhursag as his spouse. (Jacobsen p.105) "Enlil and Ninlil" He is also banished to the nether world (kur) for his rape of [Ninlil](#), his intended bride, but returns with the first product of their union, the moon god Sin (also known as [Nanna](#)). (Kramer, Sumerians 1963: pp.145-147). Ninlil follows him into exile as his wife. He tells the various underworld guardians to not reveal his whereabouts and instead poses as those guardians himself three times, each time impregnating her again it appears that at least on one occasion Enlil reveals his true self before they unite. The products of these unions are three underworld deities, including Meslamtaea (aka. [Nergal](#)) and Ninazu. Later, when Nanna visits him in Nippur, he bestows Ur to him with a palace and plentiful plantlife. (Kramer 1961 p. 43-49) Enlil is also seen

as the father of [Ninurta](#) (Kramer 1961 p. 80).

#### "Enki and Eridu"

When Enki journeys to Enlil's city Nippur in order for his own city, Eridu to be blessed. He is given bread at Enki's feast and is seated next to An, after which Enlil proclaims that the Anunnaki should praise Enki. (Kramer 1961 pp. 62-63)

#### "The Dispute between Cattle and Grain"

Enlil and Enki, at Enki's urging, create farms and fields for the grain goddess [Ashnan](#) and the cattle goddess [Lahar](#). This area has places for Lahar to take care of the animals and Ashnan to grow the crops. The two agricultural deities get drunk and begin fighting, so it falls to Enlil and Enki to resolve their conflict - how they do so has not been recovered. (Kramer 1961 pp. 53-54; Kramer 1963 pp. 220-223)

#### "The Dispute between Emesh and Enten"

Enlil creates the herdsman deity Enten and the agricultural deity Emesh. He settles a dispute between Emesh and Enten over who should be recognized as 'farmer of the gods', declaring Enten's claim to be stronger. (Kramer 1961 p. 49-51).

#### "Enki and Ninhursag"

He helps Enki again when he was cursed by [Ninhursag](#). Enlil and a fox entreat her to return and undo her curse. (Kramer 1961 p. 57)

#### "Enki and the World Order"

The [me](#) were assembled by Enlil in his temple Ekur, and given to Enki to guard and impart to the world, beginning with Eridu, Enki's center of worship. (Kramer 1963 pp. 171-183)

#### "Inanna's Descent to the Nether World"

Enlil refuses Ninshubur's appeal on behalf of his [grand-]daughter, [Inanna](#) to help rescue her from Ereshkigal in the underworld. (Kramer 1961 pp. 86, 87, 89, 93)

#### "Ziusudra"

After the flood, he and An gave Ziusudra eternal life and had him live in Dilmun. (Kramer 1961 p. 98)

#### "Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld"

When [Gilgamesh](#) loses his *pukku* and *mikku* in the nether world, and [Enkidu](#) is held fast there by demons, he appeals to Enlil for help. Enlil refuses to assist him. (Kramer 1961 p. 35-36)  
(See also the Babylonian [Ellil](#))



Enki is the son of [Nammu](#), the primeval sea. Contrary to the translation of his name, Enki is not the lord of the earth, but of the abzu (the watery abyss and also semen) and of wisdom. This contradiction leads Kramer and Maier to postulate that he was once known as En-kur, lord of the underworld, which either contained or was contained in the Abzu. He did struggle with Kur as mentioned in the prelude to "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Underworld", and presumably was victorious and thereby able to claim the title "Lord of Kur" (the realm). He is a god of water, creation, and fertility. He also holds dominion over the land. He is the keeper of the [me](#), the divine laws. ([Kramer & Maier](#) Myths of Enki 1989: pp. 2-3) "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Underworld"

Enki sails for the Kur, presumably to rescue [Ereshkigal](#) after she was given over to Kur. He is assailed by creatures with stones. These creatures may have been an extension of Kur itself. (Wolkstein and Kramer p. 4; Kramer 1961 p. 37-38, 78-79)

"Enki and Eridu" Enki raises his city Eridu from the sea, making it very lush. He takes his boat to Nippur to have the city blessed by Enlil. He throws a feast for the gods, giving Enlil, An, and Nintu spacial attention. After the feast, Enlil proclaims that the Anunnaki should praise Enki. (Kramer 1961; pp. 62-63)

"Enki and the World Order"

The *me* were assembled by [Enlil](#) in Ekur and given to Enki to guard and impart to the world, beginning with Eridu, his center of worship. From there, he guards the *me* and imparts them on the people. He directs the *me* towards Ur and Meluhha and Dilmun, organizing the world with his decrees. (Kramer 1963 pp. 171-183)

"The Dispute between Cattle and Grain"

Enlil and Enki, at Enki's urging, create farms and fields for the grain goddess [Ashnan](#) and the cattle goddess [Lahar](#). This area has places for Lahar to take care of the animals and Ashnan to grow the crops. The two agricultural deities get drunk and begin fighting, so it falls to Enlil and Enki to resolve their conflict - how they do so has not been recovered. (Kramer 1961 pp. 53-54; Kramer 1963 pp. 220-223)

"Enki and Ninhursag"

He blessed the paradisaical land of Dilmun, to have plentiful water and palm trees. He sires the goddess Ninsar upon [Ninhursag](#), then sires Ninkur upon Ninsar, finally siring Uttu, goddess of plants, upon Ninkur. Uttu bore eight new types of trees from Enki. He then consumed these tree-children and was cursed by Ninhursag, with one wound for each plant consumed. [Enlil](#) and a fox act on Enki's behalf to call back Ninhursag in order to undo the damage. She joins with Enki again and bears eight new children, one to cure each of the wounds. (Kramer 1963 pp. 147-149; Kramer 1961 pp. 54-59)

"Enki and Ninmah: The Creation of Man"

The gods complain that they need assistance. At his mother Nammu's prompting, he directs her, along with some constructive criticism from Ninmah (Ninhursag), in the creation of man from the heart of the clay over the Abzu. Several flawed versions were created before the final version was made. (Kramer 1963 pp. 149-151; Kramer 1961 pp. 69-72)

#### "Inanna's Descent to the Nether World"

He is friendly to [Inanna](#) and rescued her from Kur by sending two sexless beings to negotiate with, and flatter Ereshkigal. They gave her the Food of Life and the Water of Life, which restored her. (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 62-64)

#### "Inanna and Enki"

Later, [Inanna](#) comes to Enki and complains at having been given too little power from his decrees. In a different text, she gets Enki drunk and he grants her more powers, arts, crafts, and attributes - a total of ninety-four *me*. Inanna parts company with Enki to deliver the *me* to her cult center at Erech. Enki recovers his wits and tries to recover the *me* from her, but she arrives safely in Erech with them. (Kramer & Maier 1989: pp. 38-68)

(See also [Ea](#))

## III B. The Seven Who Decreed Fate

In addition to the four primary deities, there were hundreds of others. A group of seven "decreed the fates" - these probably included the [first four](#), as well as [Nanna](#), his son [Utu](#), the sun god and a god of justice, and Nanna's daughter Inanna, goddess of love and war.

#### Nanna (Sin, (Suen), Ashgirbabbar)

Nanna is another name for the moon god [Sin](#). He is the product of [Enlil](#)'s rape of [Ninlil](#). (Kramer, 1963, pp. 146-7.) He travels across the sky in his *gufa*, (a small, canoe-like boat made of woven twigs and tar), with the stars and planets about him. (Kramer 1961 p. 41) Nanna was the tutelary deity of Ur (Kramer 1963 p. 66), appointed as king of that city by [An](#) and Enlil. (Kramer 1963 pp. 83-84) He journeyed to Nippur by boat, stopping at five cities along the way. When he arrived at Nippur, he proffered gifts to Enlil and pleaded with him to ensure that his city of Ur would be blessed, prosperous, and thus, not be flooded. (Kramer 1963 pp. 145-146, Kramer 1961 pp. 47-49) Nanna was married to Ningal and they produced [Inanna](#) and [Utu](#). (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 30-34; Kramer 1961 p. 41) He rests in the Underworld every month, and there decrees the fate of the dead. (Kramer 1963 p. 132, 135, 210) He refuses to send aid to Inanna when she is trapped in the underworld. (Kramer 1963 pp. 153-154) He established Ur-Nammu as his mortal representative, establishing the third Ur dynasty. (Kramer 1963 p. 84)

#### Utu

Utu is the son of [Nanna](#) and [Ningal](#) and the god of the Sun and of Justice. He goes to the

underworld at the end of every day setting in the "mountain of the west" and rising in the "mountain of the east". While there decrees the fate of the dead, although he also may lie down to sleep at night. (Kramer 1963 p. 132, 135; Kramer 1961 pp. 41-42) He is usually depicted with fiery rays coming out of his shoulders and upper arms, and carrying a saw knife. (Kramer 1961 p. 40) When [Inanna](#)'s *huluppu* tree is infested with unwelcome guests, he ignores her appeal for aid. (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 6-7) He tries to set her up with Dumuzi, the shepherd, but she initially rebuffs him, preferring the farmer. (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 30-33) He aided [Dumuzi](#) in his flight from the galla demons by helping him to transform into different creatures. (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 72-73, 81) Through Enki's orders, he also brings water up from the earth in order to irrigate Dilmun, the garden paradise, the place where the sun rises. (Kramer 1963 p. 148) He is in charge of the "Land of the Living" and, in sympathy for Gilgamesh, calls off the seven weather heroes who defend that land. (Kramer 1963 pp. 190-193) He opened the "ablal" of the Underworld for the shade of [Enkidu](#), to allow him to escape, at the behest of [Enki](#). (Kramer 1963 p. 133; Kramer 1961 p. 36)  
(See also [Shamash](#))

## Inanna

[Nanna](#) and [Ningal](#)'s daughter Inanna, goddess of love and war. "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Underworld"

A woman planted the huluppu tree in Inanna's garden, but the Imdugud-bird (Anzu bird?) made a nest for its young there, Lilith (or her predecessor, a lilitu-demon) made a house in its trunk, and a serpent made a home in its roots. Inanna appeals to [Utu](#) about her unwelcome guests, but he is unsympathetic. She appeals to Gilgamesh, here her brother, and he is receptive. He tears down the tree and makes it into a throne and bed for her. In return for the favor, Inanna manufactures a *pukku* and *mikku* for him. (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 5-9)

"Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven"

Later, Inanna seeks out Gilgamesh as her lover. When he spurns her she sends the [Bull of Heaven](#) to terrorize his city of Erech. (Kramer 1963 p. 262)

"The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi"

Her older brother Utu tries to set her up with Dumuzi, the shepherd, but she initially rebuffs him, preferring the farmer. He assures her that his parents are as good as hers and she begins to desire him. Her mother, Ningal, further assures her. The two consummate their relationship and with their exercise in fertility, the plants and grains grow as well. After they spend time in the marriage bed, Inanna declares herself as his battle leader and sets his duties as including sitting on the throne and guiding the path of weapons. At Ninshubur's request, she gives him power over the fertility of plants and animals. (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 30-50)

"Inanna's Descent to the Nether World"

Inanna also visits Kur, which results in a myth reminiscent of the Greek seasonal story of Persephone. She sets out to witness the funeral rites of her sister-in-law [Ereshkigal](#)'s husband

Gugalanna, the Bull of Heaven. She takes precaution before setting out, by telling her servant Ninshubur to seek assistance from [Enlil](#), [Nanna](#), or [Enki](#) at their shrines, should she not return. Inanna knocks on the outer gates of Kur and the gatekeeper, Neti, questions her. He consults with queen Ereshkigal and then allows Inanna to pass through the seven gates of the underworld. After each gate, she is required to remove adornments and articles of clothing, until after the seventh gate, she is naked. The Annuna pass judgment against her and Ereshkigal killed her and hung her on the wall. (see [Ereshkigal](#)) ([Wolkstein & Kramer](#) 1983 pp. 52-60)

Inanna is rescued by the intervention of [Enki](#). He creates two sexless creatures that empathize with Ereshkigal's suffering, and thereby gain a gift - Inanna's corpse. They restore her to life with the Bread of Life and the Water of Life, but the Sumerian underworld has a conservation of death law. No one can leave without providing someone to stay in their stead. Inanna is escorted by galla/demons past Ninshubur and members of her family. She doesn't allow them to claim anyone until she sees [Dumuzi](#) on his throne in Uruk. They then seize Dumuzi, but he escapes them twice by transforming himself, with the aid of [Utu](#). Eventually he is caught and slain. Inanna spies his sister, [Geshtinanna](#), in mourning and they go to Dumuzi. She allows Dumuzi, the shepherd, to stay in the underworld only six months of the year, while Geshtinanna will stay the other six. ([Wolkstein & Kramer](#) pp. 60-89) As with the Greek story of the kidnapping of Persephone, this linked the changing seasons, the emergence of the plants from the ground, with the return of a harvest deity from the nether world. Geshtinanna is also associated with growth, but where her brother rules over the spring harvested grain, she rules over the autumn harvested vines ([Wolkstein & Kramer](#) p. 168).

"Inanna and Mount Ebih"

Inanna complains to [An](#) about Mount Ebih ([Kur](#)?) demanding that it glorify her and submit lest she attack it. An discourages her from doing so because of its fearsome power. She does so anyway, bringing a storehouse worth of weapons to bear on it. She destroys it. Because she is known as the Destroyer of Kur in certain hymns, Kramer identifies Mt. Ebih with Kur. (Kramer 1961 pp. 82-83)

"Inanna and Enki"

The [me](#) were universal decrees of divine authority -the invocations that spread arts, crafts, and civilization. [Enki](#) became the keeper of the *me*. Inanna comes to Enki and complains at having been given too little power from his decrees. In a different text, she gets Enki drunk and he grants her more powers, arts, crafts, and attributes - a total of ninety-four *me*. Inanna parts company with Enki to deliver the *me* to her cult center at Erech. Enki recovers his wits and tries to recover the *me* from her, but she arrives safely in Erech with them. ([Kramer & Maier](#) 1989: pp. 38-68) (See also [Ishtar](#))

### III. C. The Annuna (Anunnaki) and others

At the next level were fifty "great gods", possibly the same as the Annuna, although several gods confined to the underworld are specifically designated Annuna, An's children. The Annuna are also said to live in Dulkug or Du-ku, the "holy mound". ([Kramer](#) 1963: pp. 122-123, Black and Green p. 72, Kramer 1961, p. 73). In the "Descent of Inanna to the Nether World" the Anunnaki are identified as the seven judges of the nether world. (Kramer 1963 p. 154; Kramer 1961 p. 119)

## Ereshkigal

Ereshkigal is the queen of the underworld, who is either given to [Kur](#) in the underworld or given dominion over the underworld in the prelude to "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Underworld". (Wolkstein and Kramer p. 157-158; Kramer 1961 p. 37-38) She has a palace there with seven gates and is due a visit by those entering Kur. (Kramer 1963 pp. 131, 134) She was married to [Gugalanna](#), the Bull of Heaven, and is [Inanna](#)'s older sister. When Inanna trespassed on her domain, Ereshkigal first directs her gatekeeper to open the seven gates a crack and remove her garments. (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 55-57) Then when Inanna arrives she:

...fastened on Inanna the eye of death.  
She spoke against her the word of wrath.  
She uttered against her the cry of guilt

She struck her.

Inanna was turned into a corpse,  
...And was hung from a hook on the wall. ( [Wolkstein & Kramer](#) 1983 p. 60)

Later, when [Enki](#)'s messengers arrive, she is moaning in pain. When they empathize with her, she grants them a boon. They request Inanna's corpse and she accedes. (Wolkstein & Kramer pp. 64-67) (See also [Babylonian Ereshkigal](#))

## Nergal (Meslamtaea) -

Nergal is the second son of [Enlil](#) and [Ninlil](#). (Kramer 1961 pp. 44-45) He is perhaps the co-ruler of Kur with Ereshkigal where he has a palace and is due reverence by those who visit. He holds [Enkidu](#) fast in the underworld after Enkidu broke several taboos while trying to recover [Gilgamesh](#)'s *pukku* and *mikku*. He is more prominent in Babylonian literature and makes a brief appearance in II Kings 17:30. (See [Babylonian Nergal](#))

## Ninlil

Ninlil was the intended bride of [Enlil](#) and the daughter of Nunbarshegunu, the old woman of Nippur. Enlil raped her and was then banished to the nether world (kur). She follows him to the nether world, where she gives birth to the moon god Sin (also known as [Nanna](#)). They have three more children in the nether world including Meslamtaea/([Nergal](#)) and Ninazu who remain there

so that Sin may be allowed to leave. ([Kramer](#), Sumerians 1963: pp.146-7; Kramer 1961 pp. 43-46). In some texts she is Enlil's sister while Ninhursag is his bride. (Jacobsen p.105) Her chief shrine was in the Tummal district of Nippur. (See also [Babylonian Ninlil](#))

## Ningal

She is [Nanna](#)'s wife and the mother of [Inanna](#) and [Utu](#). She begs and weeps before [Enlil](#) for them not to flood her city, Ur.

(see also [Babylonian Ningal](#) and [Nikkal](#) of the Canaanites.)

## Nanshe

Nanshe is a goddess of the city of Lagash who takes care of orphans and widows. She also seeks out justice for the poor and casts judgement on New Year's Day. She is supported by [Nidaba](#) and her husband, Haia. (Kramer 1963 pp. 124-125)

## Nidaba

The goddess of writing and the patron deity of the *edubba* (palace archives). She is an assistant to [Nanshe](#). (Kramer 1963 pp. 124-125)

## Ninisinna (Nininsinna)

The patron goddess of the city Isin. She is the "hierodule of An"

## Ninkasi ("The Lady who fills the mouth")

She is the goddess of [brewing or alcohol](#), born of "sparkling-fresh water". (Kramer 1963 pp. 111, 206) She is one of the eight healing children born by [Ninhursag](#) for [Enki](#) She is born in response to Enki's mouth pain and Ninhursag declares that she should be the goddess who "sates the heart" (Kramer 1961 p. 58) or "who satisfies desire". (Kramer and Maier p. 30)

## Ninurta

Ninurta is Enlil's son and a warrior deity, the god of the south wind. (Kramer 1963 p. 145; Kramer 1961 p. 80) In "The Feats and Exploits of Ninurta", that deity sets out to destroy the [Kur](#). Kur initially intimidates Ninurta into retreating, but when Ninurta returns with greater resolve, Kur is destroyed. This looses the waters of the Abzu, causing the fields to be flooded with unclean waters. Ninurta dams up the Abzu by piling stones over Kur's corpse. He then drains these waters into the Tigris. (Kramer 1961 pp. 80-82). The identification of Ninurta's antagonist in this passage as Kur appears to be miscast. Black and Green identify his foe as the demon Asag, who was the spawn of An and Ki, and who produced monstrous offspring with Kur. The remainder of the details of this story are the same as in Kramer's account, but with Asag replacing Kur. In other versions, Ninurta is replaced by [Adad/Ishkur](#). (Black & Green pp. 35-36)

(See also [the Babylonian Ninurta](#))

## Ashnan

The kindly maid. Ashnan is a grain goddess, initially living in Dulkug (Du-ku). (Kramer 1961 p.

50) [Enlil](#) and [Enki](#), at Enki's urging, create farms and fields for her and for the cattle god [Lahar](#). This area has places for Lahar to take care of the animals and Ashnan to grow the crops. The two agricultural deities get drunk and begin fighting, so it falls to Enlil and Enki to resolve their conflict - how they do so has not been recovered. (Kramer 1961 pp. 53-54)

### Lahar

Lahar is the cattle-goddess, initially living in Duku (Dulkug). [Enlil](#) and [Enki](#), at Enki's urging, create farms and fields for him and the grain goddess [Ashnan](#). This area has places for Lahar to take care of the animals and Ashnan to grow the crops. The two agricultural deities get drunk and begin fighting, so it falls to Enlil and Enki to resolve their conflict - how they do so has not been recovered. (Kramer 1961 pp. 53-54; Kramer 1963 pp. 220-223)

### Emesh

Created by [Enlil](#) this god is responsible for agriculture. He quarrels with his brother Enten, and makes a claim to be the 'farmer of the gods', bringing his claim to Enlil after Enten. When Enlil judges Enten's claim to be stronger, Emesh relents, brings him gifts, and reconciles. (Kramer 1961 pp. 49-51)

### Enten

He is a farmer god, and is [Enlil](#)'s field worker and herdsman. He quarrels with his brother Emesh and makes an appeal to Enlil that he deserves to be 'farmer of the gods'. Enlil judges Enten's claim to be the stronger and the two reconcile with Emesh bringing Enten gifts. (Kramer 1961 pp. 42, 49-51)

### Uttu

She is the goddess of weaving and clothing (Kramer 1963 p. 174; Black and Green p. 182) and was previously thought to be the goddess of plants. She is both the child of Enki and Ninkur, and she bears eight new child/trees from Enki. When he then ate Uttu's children, Ninhursag cursed him with eight wounds and disappears. (Kramer 1961 pp. 57-59)

### Enbilulu

The "knower" of rivers. He is the god appointed in charge of the Tigris and Euphrates by [Enki](#). (Kramer 1961 p. 61)

### Ishkur

God appointed to be in charge of the winds by [Enki](#). He is in charge of "the silver lock of the 'heart' of heaven". (Kramer 1961 p. 61) He is identified with the Akkadian god, [Adad](#). (Black and Green pp. 35-36)

### Enkimdu

God placed in charge of canals and ditches by [Enki](#). (Kramer 1961 p. 61)

### Kabta

God placed in charge of the pickax and brickmold by [Enki](#). (Kramer 1961 p. 61)

### Mushdamma

God placed in charge of foundations and houses by [Enki](#). (Kramer 1961 p. 61)

### Sumugan

The god of the plain or "king of the mountain", he is the god placed in charge of the plant and

animal life on the plain of Sumer by [Enki](#). (Kramer 1961 pp. 61-62; Kramer 1963 p. 220)

### III. D. Demigods, mortal Heroes, and Monsters

Dumuzi (demigod) (Tammuz)

A shepherd, he is the son of [Enki](#) and Sirtur. (Wolkstein & Kramer p. 34) He is given charge of stables and sheepfolds, filled with milk and fat by [Enki](#). (Kramer 1961 p. 62) He has a palace in Kur, and is due a visit by those entering Kur. He is [Inanna](#)'s husband. In life, he was the shepherd king of Uruk.

"The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi"

[Utu](#) tries to set Inanna up with him but she initially rebuffs him, preferring the farmer. He assures her that his parents are as good as hers and she begins to desire him. The two consummate their relationship and with their exercise in fertility, the plants and grains grow as well. After they spend time in the marriage bed, Inanna declares herself as his battle leader and sets his duties as including sitting on the throne and guiding the path of weapons. At Ninshubur's request, she gives him power over the fertility of plants and animals. (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 30-50)

"Descent of Inanna to the Nether World"

Upon her rescue from the dead, he was pursued by galla demons, which he eluded for a time with the aid of [Utu](#). Eventually he was caught and slain; however, he was partially freed from his stay in the underworld by the actions of his sister [Geshtinanna](#). Now he resides there only half of the year, while she lives there the other half year; this represents seasonal change (see [Inanna](#) and [Geshtinanna](#)). (Wolkstein and Kramer pp. 71-89)

(See also the Babylonian [Tammuz](#).)

Geshtinanna (demigoddess)

She is Dumuzi's sister. After his death, she visited him in the underworld with Inanna, and was allowed to take his place there for six months out of the year. Her time in the underworld and her periodic emergence from it are linked with her new divine authority over the autumn vines and wine. (see also [Inanna](#), [Dumuzi](#))

Ziusudra (Ziusura)

In the Sumerian version of the flood story, the pious Ziusudra of Shuruppak (Kramer 1963 p. 26), the son of Ubartutu (or of Shuruppak?) (Kramer 1963 p. 224) is informed of the gods decision to destroy mankind by listening to a wall. He weathers the deluge and wind-storms aboard a huge boat. The only surviving detail of the boat is that it had a window. The flood lasts for seven days before [Utu](#) appears dispersing the flood waters. After that, Ziusudra makes appropriate sacrifices and prostrations to Utu, [An](#) and [Enlil](#). He is given eternal life in Dilmun by An and Enlil. (Kramer 1963 pp. 163-164; Kramer 1961 pp. 97-98)



Jacobsen reports a more complete version of "The Eridu Genesis" than Kramer or Black and Green which is close to the Babylonian story of [Atrahasis](#). In this account, man had been directed to live in cities by [Nintur](#) but as they thrived, the noise irritated Enlil, who thus started the flood. In this account, [Enki](#) warns Ziusudra, instructing him to build the boat for his family and for representatives of the animals. The remainder is consistent with the accounts of Kramer and Black and Green. (Jacobsen p. 114)

### Gilgamesh (demigod)

The son, either of a nomad or of the hero-king Lugalbanda and of the goddess Ninsun, Gilgamesh, may have been a historical King of Erech, during the time of the first Ur dynasty. His kingship is mentioned in various places, including the Sumerian King list and he was also an *en*, a spiritual head of a temple. He was also the lord of Kulab and by one account, the brother of [Inanna](#). He was "the prince beloved of An", (Kramer p. 260, 188) and "who performs heroic deeds for Inanna" (Kramer 1963 p. 187)

"Gilgamesh and Agga" - (Pritchard pp.44-47; Kramer 1963 pp. 187-190)

King Agga of Kish sent an ultimatum to Erech. Gilgamesh tried to convince the elders that Erech should sack Kish in response, but the elders wanted to submit. He responded by taking the matter to the men of the city, who agreed to take up arms. Agga laid seige to Erech and Gilgamesh resisted with the help of his servant, [Enkidu](#). He sent a soldier through the gate to Agga. The soldier is captured and tortured with a brief respite while another of Gilgamesh's soldiers climbs over the wall. Gilgamesh himself then climbs the wall and Agga's forces are so taken aback by the sight of them that Agga capitulates. Gilgamesh graciously accepts Agga's surrender, prasing him for returning his city.

After this episode, he apparently took Nippur from the son of the founder of the Ur I dynasty.

"Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living" (Pritchard pp. 47-50, Kramer 1963 pp. 190-197)

Gilgamesh, saddened by the dying he sees in his city, decides to go to the "Land of the Living" says so to Enkidu. At Enkidu's urging, Gilgamesh makes a sacrifice and first speaks to [Utu](#), who is in charge of that land. After he informs Utu of his motives, the god calls off his seven guardian weather heroes. Gilgamesh recruits fifty single men to accompany them and commissions swords and axes. They travel over seven mountains, felling trees along the way eventually finding the "cedar of his heart". After some broken text Gilgamesh is in a deep sleep, presumably after an encounter with [Huwawa](#). Enkidu or one of the others wakes him. They come upon Huwawa and Gilgamesh distracts him with flattery, then puts a nose ring on him and binds his arms. Huwawa grovels to Gilgamesh and Enkidu and Gilgamesh almost releases him. Enkidu argues against it and when Huwawa protests, he decapitates Huwawa. Gilgamesh is angered by Enkidu's rash action.

"Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld" (Kramer 1963 p.197-205)

Inanna appeals to Gilgamesh, here her brother, when her *huluppu* tree has been occupied and he is receptive. He tears down the tree and makes it into a throne and bed for her. In return for the favor, Inanna manufactures a *pukku* and *mikku* for him.

He leaves them out, goes to sleep and can't find them where he left them when he awakens. They had fallen into the underworld. Enkidu asks him what is wrong and Gilgamesh asks him to retrieve them, giving him instructions on how to behave in the underworld. Enkidu enters the "Great Dwelling" through a gate, but he broke several of the underworld taboos of which Gilgamesh warned, including the wearing of clean clothes and sandals, 'good' oil, carrying a weapon or staff, making a noise, or behaving normally towards ones family (Kramer 1963: pp. 132-133). For these violations he was "held fast by 'the outcry of the nether world'". Gilgamesh appeals to Enlil, who refuses to help. Intervention by [Enki](#), rescued the hero - or at least raised his shade for Gilgamesh to speak with.

"Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven"

He rejects Inanna's advances, so she sends the "[Bull of Heaven](#)" to ravage Erech in retribution. (Kramer 1963 p. 262)

"Death of Gilgamesh" (Pritchard pp. 50-52, Kramer 1963 pp. 130-131)

Gilgamesh is fated by Enlil to die but also to be unmatched as a warrior. When he dies, his wife and household servants make offerings (of themselves?) for Gilgamesh to the deities of the underworld.

He is given a palace in the nether world and venerated as lesser god of the dead. It is respectful to pay him a visit upon arrival. If he knew you in life or is of your kin he may explain the rules of Kur to you - which he helps to regulate.

His son and successor was either Ur-lugal or Urnungal.

(see [Babylonian Gilgamesh](#))

## Enkidu

[Gilgamesh](#)'s servant and friend. He assists Gilgamesh in putting back Agga's seige of Erech.

He accompanies Gilgamesh and his soldiers on the trip to the "Land of the Living". Probably after an initial encounter with [Huwawa](#), Gilgamesh falls asleep and Enkidu awakens him. They come upon Huwawa and Gilgamesh distracts him with flattery, then puts a nose ring on him and binds his arms. Huwawa grovels to Gilgamesh and Enkidu and Gilgamesh almost releases him. Enkidu argues against it and when Huwawa protests, he decapitates Huwawa. Gilgamesh is angered by Enkidu's rash action.

The main body of the Gilgamesh tale includes a trip to the nether-world. Enkidu enters the "Great

Dwelling" through a gate, in order to recover Gilgamesh's *pukku* and *mikku*, objects of an uncertain nature. He broke several taboos of the underworld, including the wearing of clean clothes and sandals, 'good' oil, carrying a weapon or staff, making a noise, or behaving normally towards ones family (Kramer 1963: pp. 132-133). For these violations he was "held fast by 'the outcry of the nether world'". Intervention by [Enki](#), rescued the hero or at least raised his shade for Gilgamesh to speak with.

## Kur

Kur literally means "mountain", "foreign land", or "land" and came to be identified both with the underworld and, more specifically, the area which either was contained by or contained the Abzu. (Kramer 1961 p. 76) In the prelude to "Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Underworld, [Ereshkigal](#) was carried off into the Kur as it's prize at about the same time as [An](#) and [Enlil](#) carried off the heaven and the earth. Later in that same passage, [Enki](#) also struggled with Kur as and presumably was victorious, thereby able to claim the title "Lord of Kur" (the realm). Kramer suggests that Kur was a dragon-like creature, calling to mind Tiamat and Leviathan. The texts suggests that Enki's struggle may have been with instruments of the land of kur - its stones or its creatures hurling stones. (Kramer 1961 p. 37-38, 78-79) (See also [Apsu](#) and [Tiamat](#).)

In "The Feats and Exploits of [Ninurta](#)", that deity sets out to destroy the Kur. Kur initially intimidates Ninurta into retreating, but when Ninurta returns with greater resolve, Kur is destroyed. This looses the waters of the Abzu, causing the fields to be flooded with unclean waters. Ninurta dams up the Abzu by piling stones over Kur's corpse. He then drains these waters into the Tigris. (Kramer 1961 pp. 80-82). The identification of Ninurta's antagonist in this passage as Kur appears to be miscast. Black and Green identify his foe as the demon Asag, who was the spawn of An and Ki, and who produced monstrous offspring with Kur. The remainder of the details of this story are the same as in Kramer's account, but with Asag replacing Kur. In other versions, Ninurta is replaced by [Adad/Ishkur](#). (Black & Green pp. 35-36)

"Inanna and Mt. Ebih": Inanna is also described in Hymns as a destroyer of Kur. If one, as Kramer does, identifies Kur with Mt. Ebih, then we learn that it has directed fear against the gods, the Anunnaki and the land, sending forth rays of fire against the land. Inanna declares to An that she will attack Mt. Ebih unless it submits. An warns against such an attack, but Inanna proceeds anyway and destroys it. (Kramer 1961 pp. 82-83).

## Gugalanna (Gugal-ana)

He is [Ereshkigal](#)'s husband, and according to Kramer, the Bull of Heaven. (Wolkstein and Kramer p. 55) Black and Green tentatively identify him with Ennugi, god of canals and dikes, rather than the Bull of Heaven. (Black and Green p. 77) After Gilgamesh spurned Inanna, she sends the Bull of Heaven to terrorize Erech. (Kramer 1963 p. 262)

## Huwawa

Guardian of the cedar of the heart in the the "Land of the living", Huwawa has dragon's teeth, a

lion's face, a roar like rushing flood water, huge clawed feet and a thick mane. He lived there in a cedar house. He appears to have attacked Gilgamesh, Enkidu and company when they felled that cedar. They then come upon Huwawa and Gilgamesh distracts him with flattery, then puts a nose ring on him and binds his arms. Huwawa grovels to Gilgamesh and Enkidu and Gilgamesh almost releases him. Enkidu argues against it and when Huwawa protests, he decapitates Huwawa. See also the [Babylonian Humbaba](#)

Gods in Kur with palaces who are due reverence:

Namtar - "Fate", the demon responsible for death. Namtar has no hands or feet and does not eat or drink. (Pritchard p. 51)

Hubishag

Ningishzida - the god of dawn

Dimpemekug - due gifts, no palace

Neti - the chief gatekeeper

the scribe of Kur - due gifts, no palace

The Sumerians had many other deities as well, most of which appear to have been minor.

## IV. What about the Underworld?

The underworld of the Sumerians is revealed, to some extent, by a composition about the death and afterlife of the king and warlord Ur-Nammu. After having died on the battlefield, Ur-Nammu arrives below, where he offers sundry gifts and sacrifices to the "seven gods" of the nether world:

...[Nergal](#), [the deified] [Gilgamesh](#), [Ereshkigal](#) [the queen of the underworld, who is either given to Kur in the underworld or given dominion over the underworld in the prelude to Gilgamesh (Kramer & Maier 1989: p. 83) (Wolkstein & Kramer 1983: p. 4)] , [Dumuzi](#) [the shepherd, Inanna's husband], Namtar, Hubishag, and Ningishzida - each in his own palace; he also presented gifts to Dimpimekug and to the "scribe of the nether-world."... [After arriving at his assigned spot] ...certain of the dead were turned over to him, perhaps to be his attendants, and Gilgamesh, his beloved brother, explained to him the rules and regulations of the nether world. ([Kramer](#) 1963: p. 131)

Another tablet indicates that the sun, moon, and their respective gods, spent time in the underworld as well. The sun journeyed there after setting, and the moon rested there at the end of the month. Both [Utu](#) and [Nanna](#) "'decreed the fate' of the dead" while there. ([Kramer](#) 1963: p. 132) Dead heroes ate bread, drank, and quenched the dead's thirst with water. The gods of the nether world, the deceased, and his city, were prayed to for the benefit of the dead and his family.

The Sumerian version of Gilgamesh includes a trip to the nether world as well. In the prologue, [Enki](#) sails for the Kur, presumably to rescue [Ereshkigal](#) after she was given over to [Kur](#). He is assailed by creatures with stones. The main body of the tale includes a trip to the nether world as well. [Enkidu](#) enters the "Great Dwelling" through a gate, in order to recover Gilgamesh's pukku and mikku, objects of an uncertain nature. He broke several taboos of the underworld, including the wearing of clean clothes and sandals, 'good' oil, carrying a weapon or staff, making a noise, or behaving normally towards ones family ([Kramer](#) 1963: pp. 132-133). For these violations he was "held fast by 'the outcry of the nether world'". Intervention by Enki, rescued the hero.

When Enlil visits the nether world, he must pass by a gatekeeper, followed by a "man of the river" and a "man of the boat" - all of whom act as guardians. ([Kramer](#) 1961 pp. 45-47)

[Inanna](#) also visits Kur, which results in a myth reminiscent of the Greek seasonal story of Persephone. She sets out to witness the funeral rites of her sister-in-law [Ereshkigal](#)'s husband [Gugalanna](#), the Bull of Heaven. She takes precaution before setting out, by telling her servant Ninshubur to seek assistance from [Enlil](#), [Nanna](#), or [Enki](#) at their shrines, should she not return. Inanna knocks on the outer gates of Kur and the gatekeeper, Neti, questions her. He consults with queen Ereshkigal and then allows Inanna to pass through the seven gates of the underworld. After each gate, she is required to remove adornments and articles of clothing, until after the seventh gate, she is naked. The Annuna pass judgment against her and Ereshkigal slays her and hangs her on the wall ([Wolkstein & Kramer](#) 1983 p. 60)

[Inanna](#) is rescued by the intervention of [Enki](#). He creates two sexless creatures that empathize with [Ereshkigal](#)'s suffering, and thereby gain a gift - Inanna's corpse. They restore her to life with the Bread of Life and the Water of Life, but the Sumerian underworld has a conservation of death law. No one can leave without providing someone to stay in their stead. Inanna is escorted by galla/demons past Ninshubur and members of her family. She doesn't allow them to claim anyone until she sees [Dumuzi](#) on his throne in Uruk. They then seize Dumuzi, but he escapes them twice by transforming himself, with the aid of [Utu](#). Eventually he is caught and slain. Inanna spies his sister, [Geshtinanna](#), in mourning and they go to Dumuzi. She allows Dumuzi, the shepherd, to stay in the underworld only six months of the year, while Geshtinanna will stay the other six. ([Wolkstein & Kramer](#) pp. 60-89) As with the Greek story of the kidnapping of Persephone, this linked the changing seasons, the emergence of the plants from the ground, with the return of a harvest deity from the nether world. Although he had always been a shepherd (and possibly a mortal king) he was blessed with the powers of fertility following the consummation of his marriage to Inanna in "The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi".

As the farmer, let him make the fields fertile,  
 As the shepherd, let him make the sheepfolds multiply,  
 Under his reign let there be vegetation,  
 Under his reign let there be rich grain ([Wolkstein & Kramer](#) p. 45)

Geshtinanna is also associated with growth, but where her brother rules over the spring harvested grain,

she rules over the autumn harvested vines ([Wolkstein & Kramer](#) p. 168)

## V. What are *me* anyway?

Another important concept in Sumerian theology, was that of *me*. The *me* were universal decrees of divine authority. They are the invocations that spread arts, crafts, and civilization. The *me* were assembled by [Enlil](#) in Ekur and given to [Enki](#) to guard and impart to the world, beginning with Eridu, his center of worship. From there, he guards the *me* and imparts them on the people. He directs the *me* towards Ur and Meluhha and Dilmun, organizing the world with his decrees. Later, [Inanna](#) comes to Enki and complains at having been given too little power from his decrees. In a different text, she gets Enki drunk and he grants her more powers, arts, crafts, and attributes - a total of ninety-four *me*. Inanna parts company with Enki to deliver the *me* to her cult center at Erech. Enki recovers his wits and tries to recover the *me* from her, but she arrives safely in Erech with them. ([Kramer & Maier](#) 1989: pp. 38-68)

## VI. I've heard that there are a lot of Biblical parallels in Sumerian literature. What are they?

Traces of Sumerian religion survive today and are reflected in writings of the Bible. As late as Ezekiel, there is mention of a Sumerian deity. In [Ezekiel 8:14](#), the prophet sees women of Israel weeping for [Tammuz](#) ([Dumuzi](#)) during a drought.

The bulk of Sumerian parallels can, however be found much earlier, in the book of Genesis. As in Genesis, the Sumerians' world is formed out of the watery abyss and the heavens and earth are divinely separated from one another by a solid dome. The second chapter of Genesis introduces the paradise Eden, a place which is similar to the Sumerian Dilmun, described in the myth of "[Enki](#) and [Ninhursag](#)". Dilmun is a pure, bright, and holy land - now often identified with Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. It is blessed by Enki to have overflowing, sweet water. Enki fills it with lagoons and palm trees. He impregnates Ninhursag and causes eight new plants to grow from the earth. Eden, "in the East" ([Gen. 2:8](#)) has a river which also "rises" or overflows, to form four rivers including the Tigris and Euphrates. It too is lush and has fruit bearing trees. ([Gen. 2:9-10](#)) In the second version of the creation of man "The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being." Enki and Ninmah (Ninhursag) use a similar method in creating man. [Nammu](#), queen of the abyss and Enki's mother, bids Enki to "Knead the 'heart' of the clay that is over the Abzu " and "give it form" ([Kramer & Maier](#) p. 33) From there the similarities cease as the two create several malformed humans and then the two deities get into an argument.

Returning to [Enki](#) and [Ninhursag](#), we find a possible parallel to the creation of Eve. Enki consumed the plants that were Ninhursag's children and so was cursed by Ninhursag, receiving one wound for each plant consumed. [Enlil](#) and a fox act on Enki's behalf to call back Ninhursag in order to undo the damage. She joins with him again and bears eight new children, each of whom are the cure to one of his wounds.

The one who cures his rib is named Ninti, whose name means the Queen of months, ([Kramer & Maier 1989: pp. 28-30](#)) the lady of the rib, or she who makes live. This association carries over to Eve. ([Kramer, History Begins at Sumer 1981: pp. 143-144](#)) In Genesis, Eve is fashioned from Adam's rib and her name hawwa is related to the Hebrew word hay or living. ([New American Bible p. 7.](#)) The prologue of "Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Underworld" may contain the predecessor to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This tree not only contains a crafty serpent, but also [Lilith](#), the legendary first wife of Adam. The huluppu tree is transplanted by [Inanna](#) from the banks of the Euphrates to her garden in Uruk, where she finds that:

...a serpent who could not be charmed  
made its nest in the roots of the tree,  
The [Anzu](#) bird set his young in the branches of the tree,  
And the dark maid Lilith built her home in the trunk. ([Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: p. 8](#))

It should be noted that Kramer's interpretation that this creature is Lilith has [come into question of late](#).

Another possible Sumerian carry-over related to the Fall of man is the lack of "pangs of childbearing" for those in Dilmun. In particular, [Ninhursag](#) gives birth in nine days, not nine months, and the pass "like good princely cream" ([Kramer 1981: p. 142,145](#)) or "fine oil" ([Kramer & Maier 1989: p. 25](#))

The quarrels between herder god and farmer deity pairs such as [Lahar](#) and [Ashnan](#) or [Enten](#) and [Emesh](#) are similar in some respects to the quarrels of Cain and Abel. In the Sumerian versions death appears to be avoided, although we do not have the complete Lahar and Ashnan story. (Kramer 1961 pp. 49-51, 53-54)

The ten patriarchs in Genesis born prior to the flood lived very long lives, most in excess of 900 years. The seventh patriarch, Enoch, lived *only* 365 years before he "walked with God". (Genesis 5). The account which numbers those Patriarchs as ten is attributed to the Priestly source. The Yahwist source (J), details only seven Patriarchs prior to Noah, so that with him included, there are eight antediluvian patriarchs. (Genesis 4: 17-18) The eight antediluvian kings of in the Sumerian King List also lived for hundreds of years. (Kramer 1963 p. 328) S. H. Hooke notes another version of the Sumerian King list, found in Larsa details ten antediluvian kings. (Hooke, p. 130) The clearest Biblical parallel comes from the story of the Flood. In the Sumerian version, the pious Ziusudra is informed of the gods decision to destroy mankind by listening to a wall. He too weathers the deluge aboard a huge boat. Noah's flood lasts a long time, but Ziusudra comes to rest within seven days and not the near year of the Bible. He does not receive a covenant, but is given eternal life. (Kramer 1963 pp. 163-164; Kramer 1961 pp. 97-98)

As far as the New Testament goes, many also draw a parallel between [Dumuzi](#) and Jesus because Dumuzi is a shepherd-king and he is resurrected from the dead. This is perhaps appealing to some as Dumuzi's Akkadian analog, Tammuz, appears in the Bible, however Dumuzi's periodic return from the

underworld is not unique even in Sumerian literature. His sister [Geshtinanna](#) also rises from the dead, and if one counts those born as deities, [Inanna](#) does as well. Periodic death and rebirth is a common theme in agricultural myths where the return of the deities from the earth mirrors a return to life of plants.

## VII. Sources

- Black, Jeremy and Green, Anthony, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1992. This up-to-date and thorough resource on Mesopotamian mythology has great photos and illustrations by Tessa Rickards and very useful entries which often indicate the times and places when variant tales were current. My only complaint is that it is not always clear whether information in an entry is applicable to the Sumerian, Akkadian, or both versions of a particular deity or hero.
- Crawford, Harriet, *Sumer and the Sumerians*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991. (This is a briefer but more up to date archaeological look at the Sumerians than you'll find with Kramer. There isn't much mythic content in this one, but there are many wonderful figures detailing city plans, and the structure of temples and other buildings.)
- Jacobsen, Thorkild, *The Treasures of Darkness*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1976. A good alternative to Kramer, Jacobsen explores Mesopotamian religious development from early Sumerian times through the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*. Most of the book winds up being on the Sumerians.
- Kramer, Samuel Noah, and Maier, John, *Myths of Enki, the Crafty God*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989. The most recent work that I've been able to find by Kramer. They translate and analyze all of the available myths which include Enki. I've only seen it available in hardcover and I haven't seen it in a bookstore yet.
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- *The New American Bible*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 1970.

## VIII. Other books of interest



- Algaze, Guillermo, "The Uruk Expansion", *Current Anthropology*, Dec. 1989. This article helped with the introduction material.
- Hooke, S. H. *Middle Eastern Mythology*, Penguin Books, New York, 1963. This work covers Sumerian, Babylonian, Canaanite/Ugaritic, Hittite, and Hebrew mythologic material in brief and with comparisons.
- Fagan, B. M., *People of the Earth*, Glenview Il, Scott Forsman, 1989. This archaeology text book helped provide some of the introductory material.
- Kramer, Samuel Noah, *History Begins at Sumer*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1981. (This text runs through a bunch of "firsts" that Kramer attributes to the Sumerians. I only looked at it briefly, but it seemed to contain about the same information as was in *The Sumerians* only in a "Wow neat!" format instead of something more coherent.)
- Pritchard J. B., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton, 1955. There is also a 1969 edition of this work and a companion volume of pictures. It seems to be the authoritative source for all complete texts of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Canaanites, Hittites, and perhaps other groups as well. It's pricy but many libraries have a copy.
- Stephenson, Neal, *Snowcrash*, Bantam Books, New York, 1992. Cyberpunk meets "Inanna, Enki, and the Me".
- Wooley, C. Leonard, *Excavations at Ur*, 1954. This is one of the earlier works on the subject, and as such is not as complete as the others although it is of historical interest.

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see also the [Assyro-Babylonian Mythology FAQ](#).

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# The Assyro-Babylonian Mythology FAQ version 1.9.html

by [Christopher B. Siren](#) (Nov. 1994)

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last revised (October, 2003)

changes since last revision:

October 2003: added the Biblical parallels section (in progress) and some more citations

August 1999: added clarifying remark to Bahamut answer.

October 1995: lengthened Bahamut answer; added a couple external links; made changes for move to UNH.

The web version at [home.comcast.net/~chris.s/assyrbabyl-faq.html](http://home.comcast.net/~chris.s/assyrbabyl-faq.html) is the most up to date, however the last copy of this FAQ posted to Usenet should also be available via anonymous ftp at:

[rtfm.mit.edu at /pub/usenet/news.answers/assyrbabyl-faq](ftp://rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet/news.answers/assyrbabyl-faq)

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## I. Overview (including regional history)

First, some definitions: Mesopotamia, in general, refers to the area of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Assyria, was the northern portion of Mesopotamia, who's capital was Ashur (until 883 BCE, when it was

moved to Calah/Nimrud) and whose reach included the major city of Nineveh (Ninua). Sumer refers to the southern delta region, whose primary cities included Ur, Uruk, and Eridu. Akkad was a region north of Sumer which included the area around modern Baghdad as well as the ancient sites of Babylon, Kish, and Nippur.

The political organization of the region was basically a collection of city-states. **Sargon of Agade** (2371-16 BCE) united the regions of Sumer and Akkad. His descendants eventually lost control of the empire due to pressures from the Hurrians, the Hittites, and other invaders, not to mention internal pressures. In the south Sumer again gained ascendancy, dominated by the city-state Ur. Sumer then collapsed under the Amorites around 2000 BCE. They established many sub- kingdoms including Assyria and Babylon.

Assyria attained a brief period of dominance under Shamshi-Adad (1813-1781 BCE) but was soon superseded by Babylon under Hammurabi (Hammurabi) (1792-50 BCE) who established what once were thought to be the first written law codes (more recent discoveries include law codes from a couple centuries prior to Hammurabi). The first Babylonian dynasty had begun in 1894 BCE, coinciding with the **Old Babylonian** period of literature. It collapsed in 1595 BCE when the Hittites sacked its eponymous capital.

**Assyria** had been taken over by the Mitanni (a Hurrian speaking kingdom) but established its independence in the mid 14th century BCE. Under Tukulti-Ninurta I Assyria dominated the entire fertile crescent in the late 13th century. By the time of Tiglath-Pileser I, about a century later it had directed more of its attention westwards towards the Levant in the West and lost control of Babylon and the south. Slowly Assyria began to expand again, reaching its apex between 750 and 650 BCE under the rulers Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Ashurbanipal (668-627 BCE). The empire collapsed from invaders with Nineveh falling to Nabopolassar of Babylon in 612 BCE and the empire dying in 605 BCE.

Meanwhile, Babylon had been reasserting itself. Nabopolassar had begun the Chaldean dynasty during his rule beginning in 625 BCE. This period is also known as the **Neo-Babylonian** period although that term also describes the language of that era. Under Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar II, Babylon expanded westward, taking Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Babylon fell in the mid-540's to Cyrus the Persian whose empire lasted until the late 300's BCE when Alexander of Macedon established his empire and renamed the area "Mesopotamia". (See also Shawn Bayern's [History Babylonia](#))

## II. So these guys were just like the Sumerian Deities right?

Well some of them were mostly like the Sumerian Deities, but as you might expect, they have their own kinks and differences. In general the following relationships apply:

Sumerian name

Babylonian Name

[An](#)

[Anu](#)

<a href="#">Ki/Ninhursag</a>	<a href="#">Aruru</a> , Mammi
<a href="#">Enlil</a>	<a href="#">Ellil</a>
<a href="#">Enki</a>	<a href="#">Ea</a>
<a href="#">Nanna</a>	<a href="#">Sin</a>
<a href="#">Inanna</a>	<a href="#">Ishtar</a>
<a href="#">Utu</a>	<a href="#">Shamash</a>
<a href="#">Ninlil</a>	Mullitu, Mylitta

This is not a cut and dry relation. Sumerian and Babylonian names appear in the same Babylonian document, sometimes referring to the same entity. In addition, there are numerous local variations of these deities names which, in the next section, such 'optional' names appear in parentheses after the more prevalent name.

### III. Who were the gods and the heroes of the Babylonians then?

#### A. The Older (genealogically) Gods:

##### Apsu

"The Epic of Creation (*Enuma Elish*): Tablet I"

He is the underworld ocean, the begetter of the skies ([Anshar](#)) and the earth ([Kishar](#)) and the father of [Lahmu](#) and [Lahamu](#). He could not quell the noise of them or of their children, so he colluded with his vizier [Mummu](#) to silence the gods and allow his mate [Tiamat](#) to rest, after Tiamat herself rejected the idea. [Ea](#) found out about his plans, cast a sleeping spell on him and killed him.

(Dalley pp. 232-235, 318)

##### Tiamat

"The Epic of Creation (*Enuma Elish*): Tablets I-III"

She is primeval Chaos, bearer of the skies ([Anshar](#)) and the earth ([Kishar](#)) and the mother of [Lahmu](#), and [Lahamu](#). Traditionally conceived of as a serpent or dragon of some sort, this idea does not have any basis in the *Enuma Elish* itself. Within that work her physical description includes, a tail, a thigh, "lower parts" (which shake together), a belly, an udder, ribs, a neck, a head, a skull, eyes, nostrils, a mouth, and lips. She has insides, a heart, arteries, and blood. The clamor of the younger gods disturbed her, but she continued to indulge them.

When her mate [Apsu](#) and his vizier [Mummu](#) suggested that they kill the younger gods, she grew furious, then calmed down and rejected the plan. Her restless subservient gods goaded her into action after Apsu is slain. They prepared to wage war against the other gods. As *Mother Hubur*, (the underworld river, who fashions all things), she bore giant snakes with venom for blood, and cloaked dragons with a godlike radiance yet with a terrible visage, for the war. She rallied a

horned serpent, a mushussu-dragon, a lahamu-hero, a ugallu-demon, a rabid dog, a scorpion-man, umu-demons, a fish-man, a bull-man, and eleven others underneath her champion and new lover, [Qingu](#). She gave Qingu the *Tablet of Destinies* to facilitate his command and attack. (Dalley pp. 231-249)

"The Epic of Creation (*Enuma Elish*): Tablets IV-V"

[Marduk](#) came with his host to attack her. Qingu's strategy initially confused him, and Tiamat tried to enspell him, hurling jibes at him. She was rebuffed and incited into single combat with Marduk. She continued to cast her spell and Marduk netted her, and threw a wind at her. She tried to swallow it and was undone - distended, shot, sliced in two and cut in the heart. Her crushed skull heralded her death, and half of her body was used to roof up the sky. Her eyes became the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. (Dalley pp. 249-257)

### Lahmu and Lahamu

'the hairy one' or 'muddy' they have three pairs of curls, and are naked except for a triple sash. Dalley (p. 324)

"The Epic of Creation (*Enuma Elish*)>): Tablets I-III"

They were the first children of [Tiamat](#) and [Apsu](#). [Kappa](#) was sent to fetch them by [Anshar](#), to help send off [Marduk](#) on his fight with Tiamat and be rallied to his side. They complied and helped find a princely shrine for Marduk. (Dalley pp. 232, 244-249)

### Anshar

- 'whole sky' He is the father of [Anu](#) and the child of [Tiamat](#) and [Apsu](#). He is often paired with [Kishara](#), and his qualities were assimilated with [Ashur](#). When [Ea](#) learned of Tiamat's planned war, Anshar tried to stir him into attacking her first, but was rebuffed. He turned to Anu and sent him on a peace mission to Tiamat, but Anu returned unsuccessful. An assembly was convened and [Marduk](#) came forth at Ea's urging, promising to deliver Tiamat's defeated body to Anshar's feet. He required of the assembly a promise that he would be given the leadership of the pantheon after he is victorious. He had [Kappa](#) gather [Lahmu](#), [Lahamu](#), and the other gods together to send off Marduk on his fight and rally them to his side. When they arrive they help find a princely shrine for Marduk.

### Kishar

- 'whole earth' , She is the mother of [Anu](#) and the child of [Tiamat](#) and [Apsu](#).

### Anu

- Sumerian for "heaven", a sky god, father and king of the gods. He is the son of [Anshar](#) and [Kishar](#). He lives in the third heaven. The Eanna in Uruk was dedicated both to him and consort. His first consort was Antu. They produced the Anunnaki - the underworld gods, and the utukki -

the seven evil demons. His second consort was Innina ([Ishtar](#)). He is a god of monarchs and is not friendly to the common people. He is a "King of the Igigi". He is assigned the sky as his domain in 'Atrahasis'. His 'kishru's (shooting stars) have awesome strength. He has the ability that anything he puts into words, becomes reality. He is Niudimmud's ([Ea](#)'s) father.

When [Anzu](#) stole the Tablet of Destinies from [Ellil](#), he called for one of the gods to slay Anzu and thereby greatly increase his reputation.

He gave [Marduk](#) the four winds to play with. He made a whirlwind and a flood wave and stirred up [Tiamat](#) on purpose. When Tiamat's retaliation for [Apsu](#)'s death was discovered, Anshar sent him on a peace mission to her, but he returned unsuccessfully. He helps form a princely shrine for Marduk prior to his battle with Tiamat, and gives him the Anu-power of decreeing fates, such that his word is law.

He calls [Dumuzi](#) and Gizzida speak on Adapa's behalf.

He and [Earth](#) father the Sebitti. He gives them fearsome fates and powers and puts them at [Erra](#)'s command, to aid in killing noisy, over-populous people and animals.

He agrees to send the Bull of Heaven after [Gilgamesh](#) on Ishtar's behalf, if she has made sure that the people of Uruk are properly provisioned for seven years. He decrees that either Gilgamesh or [Enkidu](#) must die for the slaying of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven. He sends [Kakka](#) to Kurnugi to tell [Ereshkigal](#) to send a messenger to receive a gift from him.

(See also the Sumerian [An](#) and the Hittite [Anus](#))

Symbol: sacred shine surmounted by the divine horned cap.

Sacred number: 60

Astrological region: heavenly equator

Sacred animal: the heavenly Bull

Antu(m)

- Sumerian for "the earth", she is a colorless being who was the first consort of [Anu](#). They produced the Anunnaki - the underworld gods, and the utukki - the seven evil demons. She was replaced by [Isthar](#) ([Inanna](#)) who is sometimes her daughter.

Aruru (Ninmah, Nintu, [Ninhursaga](#), Belet-ili, Mami)

-She is the mother goddess and was responsible for the creation of man with the help of [Enlil](#) or [Enki](#). She is also called the womb goddess, and midwife of the gods. Acting on [Ea](#)'s advice and direction, she mixed clay with the blood of the god [Geshtu-e](#), in order to shape and birth seven men and seven women. These people would bear the workload of the Igigi. She also added to the

creation of [Gilgamesh](#), and, at [Anu](#)'s command, made [Enkidu](#) in Anu's image by pinching off a piece of clay, throwing it into the wilderness, and birthing him there. Ea called her to offer her beloved [Ninurta](#) as the one who should hunt [Anzu](#). She does so. (See also the Hittite [Hannahannas](#))

Mammetum

- the maker or mother of fate.

Nammu

- one of "the pure goddesses", [Ea](#)'s mother, associated with fresh water.

## B. The Anunnaki, Igigi, and the Younger Gods

Ellil ([Enlil](#)) - Sumerian for "wind/storm-god".

Initially the leader of the pantheon, he has since relinquished his spot to [Anu](#). Possible slayer of [Enmesharra](#) and avenger of his father Anu. His role in this was upplanted by [Marduk](#) by the Babylonians. He is a short-tempered god who was responsible for the great flood. He is the creator of mankind. He is thought to favor and help those in need. He guards the "tablets of destiny", which allow him to determines the fate of all things animate or inanimate. They was once stolen from him by a Zu, a storm- bird (a bird with some human qualities). They were recovered and Zu faced judgment by Ellil. His consort is [Ninlil](#), his chief-minister is [Nusku](#). He was also god of the lands and of the earth. He is a "King of the Anunnaki". He was their counselor warrior. He and his people receive the earth in 'Atrahasis'. His temple is Duranki.

When the Igigi rebelled against him, and surrounded his house and called for Anu. After man was created in response to the Igigi's grievances, he grew weary of their noise and released several disasters upon them, after each one, man recovered and then he released a new one. The disasters included disease, flood, drought, and the great flood. He appointed [Humbaba](#) to guard the cedar forest and terrify mankind. He decreed that [Enkidu](#) must die for the slaying of the Bull of Heaven and Humbaba. He does not answer [Gilgamesh](#)'s plea to restore Enkidu to life. He found a throne for [Etana](#) to rule from in Kish. He appointed [Anzu](#) as the guardian of his bath chamber, but while bathing, Anzu stole from him the Tablet of Destinies, and his Ellil-power. [Ninurta](#), with [Ea](#)'s advise and [Belet-ili](#)'s urgings slew Anzu and recovered the Tablet of Destinies. (See also the Hittite [Ellil](#))

Symbol: Seven small circles representing the Pleiades.

Sacred number: 50

Astrological region: north of "the way of Anu" ie. 12 degrees north of the equator.

Ea ([Enki](#), Nudimmud)

- god of the waters. He is in charge of the bolt which bars the sea. He knows everything. He is the

"Lord of Wisdom" and "Lord of Incantations". When he speaks, of a thing, it will be made. He is the son of [Anu](#), but sometimes he is the son of [Anshar](#). [Dumkina](#) is his consort. He created [Zaltu](#) as a complement to [Ishtar](#). He discovered the plot of [Apsu](#) and [Mummu](#), put Apsu under a sleeping spell, and slew him and put Mummu into a daze, tied him up, and slew him. He then named his quarters Apsu, the underworld ocean that supports the world. He and Damkina produced [Bel](#) and [Marduk](#). (Bel is likely to be another name for Marduk.)

He learned that [Tiamat](#) was planning a war of revenge against the gods. His father Anshar tries to spur him into making the first attack against Tiamat, but Ea rebuffs him. When Anu's peace mission fails, he urges Marduk into action.

He suggests the method of creating man, in response to the heavy workload of the Igigi. As mankind's patron, he is the instructor of all crafts, writing, building, farming, and magic. He advises mankind when other gods would do them harm. He granted [Adapa](#) understanding, to teach mankind. When Adapa used this knowledge to break the wing of the South Wind, he cursed him and told him to complain of [Dumuzi](#) and [Gizzida](#)'s absence to Anu. While in Anu's court, he advises Adapa not to eat the bread of eternal life (lest he forfeit his life on earth). He refuses to flood mankind for [Ellil](#). Eventually he accedes, but only after advising [Atrahasis](#) to build a boat in which to weather the flood.

He tells [Nergal](#) to allow [Enkidu](#)'s spirit to visit with [Gilgamesh](#). When Ea is informed of [Ishtar](#)'s imprisonment in the Underworld, he creates 'His appearance is bright' to stand at [Ereshkigal](#)'s gate and mellow her mood and have her swear an oath by the great gods. He instructs Nergal on how to build the gift throne for Ereshkigal, and hides him with spring water to hide him from [Namtar](#) after he returned from the underworld.

When Anu and the gods could not locate a volunteer to kill [Anzu](#), he told the Igigi that he would pick one. He instructs [Belet-ili/Mami](#) to send [Ninurta](#) to slay Anzu and, through [Sharur](#) advises Ninurta on how to defeat the creature. (See also the Canaanite Heyan aka [Kothar-u-Khasis](#) and the Hittite [Ayas](#))

Symbol: Ram's head; goat-fish (a goat's head on a fish's body)

Sacred number: 40

Astrological region: 12 degrees south in the sky (includes Pisces and Aquarius)

## Mummu

- the craftsman god. He is attendant to [Ea](#) and [Apsu](#)'s vizier. He is very fond of Apsu and colludes with him to disperse the younger gods when they disturb [Tiamat](#), even after Tiamat rejects the plan. Ea found out about his plan, enspelled him and tied him up.

## Qingu (older spelling - Kingu)



- [Tiamat](#)'s battle leader and second husband/lover after [Apsu](#). He is promoted and enhanced to a leading position from among the ranks. Tiamat places the Tablet of Destinies in his possession, giving him the [Anu](#)-power, such that his word is law and affects reality. He gives his army fire-quenching breath and paralyzing venom. His battle strategy initially confuses [Marduk](#). He is defeated by Marduk and counted among the dead gods. For his part in the war he was made by Marduk to provide the blood for the creation of man - filling the role that [Geshtu-e](#) takes in other versions of the creation of man story.

## Sin ([Nannar](#))

- moon god, son of [Enlil](#). He has a beard of Lapis Lazuli and rides a winged bull. His consort is [Ningal](#). He is the father of [Shamash](#). He does not answer [Gilgamesh](#)'s plea to restore [Enkidu](#) to life.

Symbol: Crescent

Sacred number: 30

Sphere of influence: the moon, calendars, vegetation, cattle fertility

## Ningal

- the consort of [Sin](#), the mother of [Shamash](#)

## Ishtar (Ishhara, Irnini, [Inanna](#))

She is [Anu](#)'s second consort, daughter of [Anu](#) and [Antum](#), (sometimes daughter of [Sin](#)), and sometimes the sister of [Ereshkigal](#).

She is the goddess of love, procreation, and war. She is armed with a quiver and bow. Her temples have special prostitutes of both genders. She is often accompanied by a lion, and sometimes rides it. The Eanna in Uruk is dedicated both to her and Anu. As Irnini, she has a parakku (throne-base) at the cedar mountain.

**Cylinder Seal of Ishtar**

(Image from the Oriental Institute at U. Chicago)

"The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld"

She determines to go to the Underworld. She threatened to smash the gate and raise the dead so

that they would eat and outnumber the living unless the gatekeeper would open it for her. She holds the great keppu-toy (a whipping top). She is allowed in by the gate keeper, who takes her through seven gates to [Ereshkigal](#)'s realm. By Ereshkigal's rites, she is stripped of items of clothing as she passes through each of the gates: first her crown, then her earrings, then her necklace, then her tudditu (breast pins), then her belt of birthstones, then her wrist and ankle bangles, and finally her garment. While in the underworld, no creatures engaged in acts of procreation. She was kept in Egalgina and brought forth by [Namtar](#) after being sprinkled with the water of life, and after 'His appearance is bright' has been cursed. She is led back out through the gates, given back her accouterments, and released in exchange for [Dumuzi](#) (Tammuz).

#### "The Epic of Gilgamesh"

She loved [Tammuz](#) in her youth, although he spends half the year in the nether world wailing. She loved a lion, a stallion, a shepherd, all of whom she required great sacrifice from and abandoned. She loved Ishullanu, a gardener who offered her fruit, but was taken aback when she revealed herself to him, so she turned him into a frog.

After [Gilgamesh](#) cleans himself up, following his defeat of [Humbaba](#), she asks him to be her lover and husband, and offers him many gifts and the homage of earthly rulers and kingdoms. She is rejected, both because of her godly nature, and as a fair-weather lover. Ishtar asks Anu to send the Bull of Heaven to kill Gilgamesh, and he agrees.

(See also the Hittite [Shaushka](#) and the Canaanite [Astarte](#) and [Anat](#))

Symbol: an eight or sixteen-pointed star

Sacred number: 15

Astrological region: Dibal (Venus) and the Bowstar (Sirius)

Sacred animal: lion, (dragon)

## Siduri

- the barmaid, a manifestation of [Ishtar](#) who dwells at the lip of the sea, beyond which is the Land of Life, where [Utnapishtim](#) lives. She speaks with [Gilgamesh](#). She wears a veil.

## Shamash (Babbar, [Utu](#))

Shamash is the sun god, the son of [Sin](#) and [Ningal](#). He rises from the mountains with rays out of his shoulders. He enters and exits the underworld through a set of gates in the mountain (exits from Mt. Mashu, "Gilgamesh IX ii") guarded by scorpion-people. He travels both on foot and in a chariot, pulled by fiery mules. He upholds truth, and justice. He is a lawgiver and informs oracles. [Nergal](#) is a corrupt aspect of his nature.

### "Etana"

In Kish, the eagle and the serpent swore an oath to Shamash that they would not overstep the limits of Shamash. The eagle broke the oath and ate the eggs of the serpent. Shamash, 'whose net is as wide as earth', told the serpent how to serve the eagle justice. The serpent lured the eagle with a bull carcass and captured him. The eagle requested to be spared and the serpent refused, saying that Shamash's punishment would fall on him if he did not carry it out. He cut the eagle's wings and left him to die in a pit. The eagle prayed to Shamash for mercy, and Shamash refused to help personally, but sent [Etana](#) to help the eagle. He agreed to help Etana's infertility problem if Etana would help the eagle.

### "Epic of Gilgamesh"

He loves [Gilgamesh](#), hates evil and instigates Gilgamesh's quest against [Humbaba](#), guiding him and receiving prayers from him along the way. He tries to intercede to [Ellil](#) on [Enkidu](#)'s behalf, but is unsuccessful. He rebukes Enkidu for cursing the Stalker and the temple prostitute for bringing him out of the wild.

See also the Hittite [Sun-god](#) and the Canaanite [Shapshu](#).

Symbol: Solar disk with a four point star inside with rays coming from between the points. A winged disk.

Sacred Number: 20

## Aia

- [Shamash](#)'s consort

## Kakka

[Anshar](#) and [Anu](#)'s vizier, who is sent to Kurnugi to deliver [Ereshkigal](#) the message that Anu wishes to deliver a gift to her via one of her messengers. Anshar sends him to round up [Lahmu](#) and [Lahamu](#) to send off [Marduk](#) for his battle with [Tiamat](#) and rally them to his side.

## Ninlil

[Ellil](#)'s consort.

(see also the [Sumerian Ninlil](#).)

## Nusku

the god of fire and [Ellil](#)'s vizier.

## Gerra(Gibil)

- the god of fire, Anunitu ([Antu](#))'s son. He despairs and will not attack [Anzu](#) after Anzu has stolen the Tablet of Destinies from [Ellil](#).

## Ishum (Hendursanga - 'lofty mace')

- He is the god of fire, and is adept at using weapons. He lights the way in front of [Erra](#) and the Sebitti. He advises Erra against attacking Marduk or his people in Babylon. When Erra takes [Marduk](#)'s seat, Ishum persuades him against destroying Babylon, finally appeasing him by promising that the other gods would acknowledge themselves as his servants.

## Kalkal

- [Ellil](#)'s doorkeeper in Nippur.

## Dumkina

- [Ea](#)'s lover, mother of [Bel](#) and [Marduk](#) (note Bel is likely to be another title for Marduk).

## Nash (Nanshe)

- one of "the pure goddesses", [Ea](#)'s daughter. Her cult center is Sirara near Lagash.

## Zaltu

- "strife", goddess created by [Ea](#) to complement [Ishtar](#).

## Ninurta (shares some characteristics with Ningrisu)

Chamberlain of the Anunnaki, the war god, the champion of the land. He is the child of [Ellil](#) and [Mami](#). He was born in Ekur, Ellil's temple in Ekur. He is responsible for some small scale irrigation. He has a bow and arrow, sometimes they are poisoned. He also carries the mace, *Sharur*, which can act as a messenger between Ninurta and other beings (notably [Ea](#)). He can marshal the *Seven of Battle*, who can generate whirlwinds.

He bound the *Mountain of Stones* in his fury, conquered the [Anzu](#) with his weapon and slew the bull-man inside the Sea. (Dalley p. 204).

After the Tablet of Destinies was stolen, [Belit-ili](#), at Ea's advice, instructed him to kill Anzu.

Initially his assault was futile, but Sharur relayed advise from Ea to him, which, when it was carried out allowed him to slay Anzu in a great onslaught. He recovered the Tablet of Destinies for Ellil. [Nissaba](#) performs a purification ceremony on him and he receives the following new names and shrines: Duku - 'holy mound' in Sumerian, Hurabtil - an Elamite god, Shushinak - patron god of the Elamite city Susa, Lord of the Secret, Pabilsag - god of the antediluvian city Larak, Nin-Azu - god of Eshunna, Ishtaran - god of Der, Zababa - warrior god of Kish, [Lugalbanda](#) - [Gilgamesh](#)'s father, Lugal-Marada - patron god of Marad, Warrior Tishpak - similar to Nin-Azu, Warrior of Uruk, Lord of the Boundary-Arrow, Panigara - a warrior god, and Papsukkal - vizier of the great gods.

## Ninsun

Known as 'the great wild cow' and the great queen, she is [Gilgamesh](#)'s mother and [Lugalbanda](#)'s mate. She is wise, 'knows everything' and interprets Gilgamesh's dreams. She offers incense and drink to [Shamash](#) and questions his decision to send Gilgamesh against [Humbaba](#). When doing so, she wears a circlet on her head and an ornament on her breast. She adopts [Enkidu](#) prior to the quest against Humbaba.

## Marduk

- son of [Ea](#) and [Dumkina](#). He supplants the other Babylonian deities to become the central figure of their pantheon. He is a "King of the Igigi" He often works with and asks questions of his father. He has fifty names many of which are those of other deities whose attributes he usurped. He was of proud form and piercing stare, born mature, powerful, and perfect and superior. He has four eyes, four ears, and emits fire from his mouth when he speaks. He is also gifted in magic.

[Anu](#) gave him the four winds to play with. When Anu's peace mission to [Tiamat](#) fails, Ea urges him into action. He goes before [Anshar](#) and the divine assembly and declares that he will defeat Tiamat and lay her head at his feet, but that the assembly must promise that he should be the one to fix fates and more or less assume the role of the leader of the pantheon. Anshar, [Lahamu](#), and Anu find him a shrine and Anu instills upon him the Anu-power in which, his word decrees fate. He is proclaimed king and invested with the scepter, throne, and staff-of-office. He is given an unfaceable weapon, the flood-weapon. He takes a bow and arrow and mace. He puts lightning in front of him, marshals his winds, makes a net to encircle Tiamat, fills his body with flame. He rides his storm-chariot driven by Slayer, Pitiless, Racer, and Flyer, poison-toothed, tireless steeds. He had a spell on his lips and an anti-toxin in his hand. He led the gods to battle. (P.251-252 Dalley)

[Qingu](#)'s strategy confused him. Tiamat tried to enspell him and wheedled at him. Marduk reproaches her and calls her out for single combat. She loses her temper and they fight. He unleashes his weapons at her, distended her body with winds, shot her in the belly with an arrow, split her in two and slit her heart. He defeats the rest of her forces and retrieves the Tablet of Destinies.

He smashed Tiamat's skull to herald her death and made half of her body the roof of the sky. He leveled Apsu, measured it and established numerous shrines for many of the gods. He set up stands for the gods, constructed the heavens and regulated the year, giving Shamash some dominion over the months and the year. He made the Tigris and Euphrates rivers from Tiamat's eyes and made mountains from her udders. He smashed the weapons of Tiamat's army and put images of them at the gates to the underworld. He set up his temple at Esharra and his seat in Babylon. The gods honored him as king. He put blood and bones together as and made early man to bear the work of the gods, as in Atrahasis. For Qingu's part in the war he was made to provide the blood for the creation of man. He divided the Anunnaki and placed 300 to guard the sky, and six hundred to dwell in heaven and earth. He had them create Babylon building the Esagalia temple and a high ziggurat. Anshar gave him many new names: 1. Asarluhi, 2. Marduk, 3. The Son, The Majesty of the Gods, 4. Marukka, 5. Mershakushu, 6. Lugal-dimmer-ankia (King of heaven and earth), 7. Bel, 8. Nari-lugal-dimmer-ankia, 9. Asarluhi, 10. Namtila, 11. Namru, 12. 'Asare, 13. Asar-alim, 14. Asar-alim-nuna, 15. Tutu, 16. Zi-ukkina, 17. Ziku, 18. Agaku, 19. Shazu, 20. Zisi, 21. Suhrim, 22. Suhgurim, 23. Zahrim, 24. Zahgurim, 25. Enbilulu, 26. Epadun, 27. Gugal, 28. Hegal, 29. Sirsir, 30. Malah, 31. Gil, 32. Gilima, 33. Agilima, 34. Zulum, 35. Mummu, 36. Zulum-ummu, 37. Gizh- numun-ab, 38. Lugal-ab-dubur, 39. Pagal-guena, 40. Lugal-Durmah, 41. Aranuna, 42. Dumu-duku, 43. Lugal-duku, 44. Lugal-shuanna, 45. Iruga, 46. Irqingu, 47. Kinma, 48. Kinma, 49. E-sizkur, 50. Addu, 51. Asharu, 52. Neberu, 53. Enkukur. He becomes a firm lawgiver and judge who, when angered is not stoppable.

Later he becomes somewhat negligent and [Erra](#) challenges him by preparing to attack his people in Babylon. He responds to the challenge by saying that he already killed most of the people in the flood and would not do so again. He also states that no- one would be in control of things if he got off of his throne to work up a flood, to which Erra volunteers to run things from Marduk's throne.

Bel (Canaanite [Baal](#))

Cleverest of the clever and sage of the gods, he is the child of [Ea](#) and [Dumkina](#). This name (meaning 'lord') is most likely referring to [Marduk](#).

Ashur (A-sir, Arusar, A-shar, Assur)

god of Assyria and war. He is a "King of the Igigi"

Symbol: winged disk enclosing upper body, while he shoots an arrow.

Shullat

- [Shamash](#)'s servant.

Papsukkal

- vizier of the Great Gods, son of [Sin](#). While [Ishtar](#) was in the Underworld, he became gloomy

and informed Sin and [Ea](#) of this plight.

Hanish

- the weather god's servant.

Adad (the Canaanite [Hadad](#), the Sumerian [Ishkur](#), the Hurrian [Teshub](#), the Canaanite/Egyptian [Resheph](#), Rimmon)

a storm god, [Anu](#)'s son. He holds a lightning bolt in his right hand and an axe in his left. He is partially responsible for the flood. He despairs and will not attack [Anzu](#) after Anzu has stolen the Tablet of Destinies from [Ellil](#).

Sacred number: 6

Sacred animal: Bull

Shara

- [Anu](#) and [Ishtar](#)'s son. He despairs and will not attack [Anzu](#) after Anzu has stolen the Tablet of Destinies from [Ellil](#).

Nin-ildu

- the carpenter god. He carries the pure axe of the sun.

Gushkin-banda

- creator of god and man, goldsmith god.

Nin-agal

- 'lord strong-arm' patron god of smiths. He chews copper and makes tools.

## C. The Anunnaki and other chthonic deities and demons

Ereshkigal (Allatu)

- the supreme goddess of the underworld. [Nergal](#) is her consort. She is often considered [Ishtar](#)'s sister. When angered, her face grows livid and her lips grow black.

She doesn't know why Ishtar would visit her, but she allows her in, according to the ancient rites. She instructs [Namtar](#) to release his diseases upon Ishtar. When 'His appearance is bright' tries to get her to swear an oath, she curses him. She has Namtar release Ishtar in exchange for [Dumuzi](#).

[Anu](#) sends [Kakka](#) to her with a message and then sends Nergal to give her a throne upon which she is to sit and give judgment. She offers Nergal food, drink, a foot bath, and entices him with her body. Eventually he succumbs and they sleep with each other for seven days. She is enraged when he wishes to leave. She sends Namtar to heaven to request that Anu, [Ellil](#), and [Ea](#) send

Nergal to her as one of the few favors she has ever had. If they do not, she will raise the dead and they will eat and outnumber the living. Nergal is brought back. In some versions of the myth, Nergal takes control of Namtar's attendant demons and grabs Ereshkigal by the hair. In this position she proposes marriage to him. In both versions they are married. (See also [Sumerian Ereshkigal](#) and the Hittite [Lelwanis](#))

#### Belit-tseri

tablet-scribe of the underworld. She kneels before [Ereshkigal](#).

#### Namtar(a)

- the Fate-Cutter, [Ereshkigal](#)'s messenger and vizier, the herald of death. He commands sixty diseases, which are grouped by the part of the body which they affect. Offerings to him may stave off diseases. He takes [Ishtar](#) back out of the Underworld at Ereshkigal's command. He acts as her messenger to [Anu](#).

#### Sumuqan

- the cattle god, he resides in the underworld, in [Ereshkigal](#)'s court.

#### Nergal (Erragal, Erra, Engidudu

- 'lord who prowls by night') -, the Unsparing, god of the underworld, husband of [Ereshkigal](#), lover of [Mami](#). As Erra he is a hunter god, a god of war and plague. He is submissive to [Ea](#). He can open the doorposts to the underworld to allow the passage of a soul.

He achieved his post by refusing to stand before an address of Namtar. When Ereshkigal called him to be punished, he dragged her off of her throne by the hair, and threatened to decapitate her. She offered him the position as her consort and he accepted.

He is an evil aspect of [Shamash](#). He allows [Enkidu](#)'s spirit to visit [Gilgamesh](#) at the behest of Ea. He is sometimes the son of Ea. Prior to his first journey to the underworld, he builds a chair of fine wood under Ea's instruction to give to Ereshkigal as a gift from [Anu](#). He is advised not to take part of the food, drink and entertainment offered there. He is tempted by Ereshkigal and eventually succumbs, sleeping with her for seven days. He then takes his leave, angering her. The gatekeeper lets him out and he climbs the stairway to heaven. He hides from [Namtar](#) in heaven, but is discovered and returns to the underworld to marry Ereshkigal. In some versions, on the way back to the Underworld, he seizes control of Namtar's attendant demons and grabs Ereshkigal by the hair. In this position she offers marriage.

He commands the Sebitti, seven warriors who are also the Pleadies, they aid in his killing of noisy, over-populous people and animals. He rallies them when he feels the urge for war, and calls [Ishum](#) to light the way. They prefer to be used in war instead of waiting while Erra kills by disease.



He regards [Marduk](#) as having become negligent and prepares to attack his people in Babylon. He challenges Marduk in Esagila in Shuanna/Babylon. Marduk responds that he already killed most of the people in the flood and would not do so again. He also states that he could not run the flood without getting off of his throne and letting control slip. Erra volunteers to take his seat and control things. Marduk takes his vacation and Erra sets about trying to destroy Babylon. [Ishum](#) intervenes on Babylon's behalf and persuades Erra to stop, but not before he promises that the other gods will acknowledge themselves as Erra's servants. (See also [Sumerian Nergal](#))

#### Irra

- plague god, underling of [Nergal](#)

#### Enmesharra

- Underworld god

#### Lamashtu

- a dread female demon also known as 'she who erases'.

#### Nabu

- god of writing and wisdom

#### Nedu

- the guardian of the first gate of the underworld. (Dalley p. 175, "Nergal and Ereshkigal"). Also known as [Neti](#) to the Sumerians.

#### Ningizzia

- a guardian of the gate of heaven; a god of the underworld.

#### Tammuz ([Dumuzi](#), Adonis)

the brother and spouse to [Ishtar](#), or the lover of her youth. He is a vegetation god. He went into the underworld and was recovered through the intervention of Ishtar. He is sometimes the guardian of heaven's gates and sometimes a god of the underworld. He is friends with [Ningizzia](#). He is exchanged for Ishtar in the Underworld. He guards the Gate of [Anu](#) with [Gizzida](#).

#### Belili ([Geshtinanna](#))

- [Tammuz/Dumuzi](#)'s sister, 'the one who always weeps', the wife of [Ningishzida](#).

#### Gizzida (Gishzida)

- son of [Ninazu](#), consort of [Belili](#), doorkeeper of [Anu](#).

## Nissaba (Nisaba)

- cereal grain harvest goddess. Her breast nourishes the fields. Her womb gives birth to the vegetation and grain. She has abundant locks of hair. She is also a goddess of writing and learned knowledge. She performs the purification ceremony on [Ninurta](#) after he has slain [Anzu](#) and is given his additional names and shrines.

## Dagan (Ugaritic for 'grain')

- chthonic god of fertility and of the Underworld. He is paired with [Anu](#) as one who acknowledges directives and courses of action put forth in front of the assembly of the gods. (See also the Canaanite [Dagon](#))

## Birdu

- (means 'pimple') an underworld god. [Ellil](#) used him as a messenger to [Ninurta](#)

## Sharru

- god of submission

## Urshambi

- boatman to [Utnapishtim](#)

## Ennugi

- canal-controller of the Anunnaki.

## Geshtu-e

- 'ear', god whose blood and intelligence are used by [Mami](#) to create man.

## D. Demigods, heroes, and monsters:

### Adapa (Uan)

- the first of the seven antediluvian sages who were sent by [Ea](#) to deliver the arts of civilization to mankind. He was from Eridu. He offered food and water to the gods in Eridu. He went out to catch fish for the temple of Ea and was caught in a storm. He broke the South Wind's wing and was called to be punished. Ea advised him to say that he behaved that way on account of [Dumuzi](#)'s and [Gizzida](#)'s absence from the country. Those gods, who tended [Anu](#)'s gate, spoke in his favor to Anu. He was offered the bread and water of eternal life, but Ea advised against his taking it, lest he end his life on earth.

### Atrahasis and Ut-napishtim,

Like the Sumerian [Ziusudra](#) (the Xisuthros of Berossus) or Noah from the Pentateuch, were the long-lived survivors of the great flood which wiped out the rest of humanity. In Atrahasis' case,

[Ellil](#) had grown tired of the noise that the mass of humanity was making, and after a series of disasters failed to eliminate the problem, he had [Enki](#) release the floodgates to drown them out. Since Enki had a hand in creating man, he wanted to preserve his creation, warned Atrahasis, and had him build a boat, with which he weathered the flood. He also had kept his ear open to Enki during the previous disasters and had been able to listen to Enki's advice on how to avoid their full effects by making the appropriate offerings to the appropriate deities. He lived hundreds of years prior to the flood, while Utnapishtim lives forever after the flood.

Utnapishtim of Shuruppak was the son of Ubaratutu. His flood has no reason behind it save the stirrings of the hearts of the Gods. As with Atrahasis, Utnapishtim is warned to build an ark by [Ea](#). He is also told to abandon riches and possessions and seek life and to tell the city elders that he is hated by [Enlil](#) and would go to the watery Abyss to live with Ea via the ark. He loads gold, silver, and the seed of all living creatures into the ark and all of his craftsmen's children as well. After Ea advises Enlil on better means to control the human population, (predators, famine, and plague), Enlil makes Utnapishtim and his wife immortal, like the gods.

## Etana

- the human taken to the sky by an eagle. He was the king of Kish. [Ishtar](#) and the Igigi searched for a king for Kish. [Ellil](#) found a throne for Etana and they declared him the king. He was pious and continued to pray to [Shamash](#), yet he had no son. Shamash told him where to find the eagle with the cut wings, who would find for him the plant of birth. He found the eagle, fed it, and taught it to fly again. Not being able to find the plant, the eagle had Etana mount on his back and they journeyed to Ishtar, mistress of birth. On flying up to heaven, Etana grew scared at the height and went down. Then after some encouraging dreams tried to ascend to heaven on the eagle again. They succeeded. Etana had a son, Balih.

## Lugalbanda

- a warrior-king and, with [Ninsun](#), the progenitor of [Gilgamesh](#). He is worshipped, being Gilgamesh's ancestor, by Gilgamesh as a god.

## Gilgamesh (possibly Bilgamesh) and Enkidu

"Epic of Gilgamesh: Tablet I"

The son of the warrior-king [Lugalbanda](#) and the wise goddess [Ninsun](#), Gilgamesh built the walls of the city Uruk, and the Eanna (house of [An](#)) temple complex there, dedicated to [Ishtar](#). He is two-thirds divine and one-third human. He is tall and a peerless warrior. He is the king and shepherd of the people of Uruk, but he was very wild, which upset his people, so they called out to [Anu](#). Anu told [Aruru](#) to make a peer for Gilgamesh, so that they could fight and be kept occupied, so she created the wild-man Enkidu. Enkidu terrorizes the countryside, and a Stalker, advised by his father, informs Gilgamesh. They bring a love-priestess to bait Enkidu. She sleeps with him, and educates him about civilization, Gilgamesh and the city. Gilgamesh dreams about Enkidu and is anxious to meet him. Enkidu comes into the city Gilgamesh is on his way to

deflower the brides in the city's "bride-house" and the two fight. They are evenly matched and become friends.

"Epic of Gilgamesh: Tablets II - V"

Gilgamesh decides to strengthen his reputation by taking on [Humbaba](#), [Enlil](#)'s guardian of the forest. Enkidu accompanies Gilgamesh and they spend much time in preparation. Eventually they find the monster and defeat him.

"Epic of Gilgamesh: Tablets VI - VIII"

Ishtar offers to become Gilgamesh's lover, but Gilgamesh insults her, saying that she has had many lovers and has not been faithful to them. Ishtar asks Anu to send the [Bull of Heaven](#) to punish Gilgamesh, and he does. Gilgamesh and Enkidu defeat the creature, but Enkidu falls ill and dies, presumably because the gods are unhappy that he helped kill Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven.

"Epic of Gilgamesh: Tablets IX - XI"

Gilgamesh mourns Enkidu and decides to visit [Utnapishtim](#), the only human who does not die. He goes to the mountains of Mashu and passes by the guardian scorpion-demons into the darkness. It becomes light as he enters the Garden of the Gods and he finds [Siduri](#) the Barmaid, to whom he relates his quest. She sends him to cross the waters of death and he confronts the boatman, Urshanabi. They cross and Gilgamesh speaks with Utnapishtim. Utnapishtim recounts the tale of the flood and challenges Gilgamesh to remain awake for six days and seven nights. He fails, but Utnapishtim's wife urges him to reveal to Gilgamesh a rejuvenative plant. Gilgamesh takes it, but loses it to a serpent before returning to Uruk.

"Epic of Gilgamesh: Tablet XII"

Another tablet of the Babylonian Gilgamesh story exists, which is similar to the [Sumerian version](#) of the tale. Enkidu volunteers to enter the underworld to recover Gilgamesh's pukku and mikku (drum and throwing stick). Gilgamesh warns him of the proper etiquette for the underworld, lest Enkidu be kept there. Enkidu prepares to enter the underworld, and is dressed, scented and bade good-bye. The Earth seizes him and Gilgamesh weeps. He pleads for Enkidu's sake to Enlil, [Sin](#), and finally to [Ea](#). Ea tells [Nergal](#) to let Enkidu's ghost escape the underworld and tell Gilgamesh about it. He tells Gilgamesh of the dead which he has seen there, of those who are cared for and those who aren't, indicating the sort of judgment and ritual associated with the afterlife and death.

Humbaba (Huwawa)

- this monster was appointed by [Ellil](#) to guard the cedar forest, which is in fact one large tree, the home of the gods, and terrify mankind. 'His shout is the storm-flood, his mouth, fire, his breath is death.' (Gardner & Maier p. 105) He has seven cloaks with which to arm himself. There is a gate and a path in the cedar mountain for Humbaba to walk on. [Gilgamesh](#) and Enkidu attack.

Humbaba pleads for mercy, Enkidu argues against mercy, and Enkidu and Gilgamesh decapitate him. See also the Sumerian [Huwawa](#).

## The Bull of Heaven

- this creature was created by [Anu](#) to kill [Gilgamesh](#) at [Ishtar](#)'s behest. At its snorting, a hole opened up and 200 men fell into it. When it fights Enkidu and Gilgamesh, it throws spittle and excrement at them. It is killed and set as an offering to [Shamash](#).

## Anzu

- a demonic being with lion paws and face and eagle talons and wings. It was born on the mountain Hehe. Its beak is like a saw, its hide as eleven coats of mail. It was very powerful. [Ellil](#) appointed him to guard his bath chamber. He envied the Ellil-power inherent in Ellil's Tablet of Destinies and stole it while Ellil was bathing. With the Tablet of Destinies, anything he puts into words becomes reality. He takes advantage of this by causing [Ninurta](#)'s arrows to never reach their target. However, once [Ea](#)'s advice reached Ninurta, Anzu was slain by the hero's onslaught.

## aqrabuamelu (girtablilu)

- scorpion-man, the guardians of the gates of the underworld. Their "terror is awesome" and their "glance is death". They guard the passage of [Shamash](#). They appraise [Gilgamesh](#) and speak with him.

## Definitions:

### Anunnaki

- gods (mostly of the earth). The sky Anunnaki set the Igigi to digging out the rivers

### Igigi

- gods (mostly of the heavens) They are given the task of digging riverbeds by the Anunnaki. They rebelled against [Ellil](#).

### Sebitti

- the seven warrior gods led by [Erra](#); in the sky they are the Pleadies. They were children of [Anu](#) and the [Earth-mother](#). Anu gave them fearsome and lethal destinies and put them under Erra's command. They prefer to exercise their skills instead of letting Erra stay in the cities with his diseases.

### Utukki - demons

Muttabriqu - Flashes of Lightning

Sarabda - Bailiff

Rabishu - Croucher

Tirid - Expulsion

Idiptu - Wind

Bennu - Fits

Sidana - Stagers

Miqit - Stroke

Bel Uri - Lord of the Roof

Umma - Feverhot

Libu - Scab

gallu-demons - can frequently alter their form.

umu-demons - fiercely bare their teeth.

## IV. What about the Underworld and Heaven and all that?

For a more general discussion of this, take a look at the [Underworld](#) and [Cosmology](#) sections in the [Sumerian FAQ](#), for the particulars, see below.

The [Igigi](#) and the [Anunnaki](#) met in heaven in Ubshu-ukkinakku, the divine assembly hall. The [Gilgamesh](#) epic has the gods dwelling in the cedar mountain. They had their parakku, throne-bases, there. It was an enormous tree at the cedar forest and was guarded by [Humbaba](#). There is a stairway up to heaven from the underworld.

As for the underworld Kurnugi (Sumerian for 'land of no return'). It is presided over by [Ereshkigal](#) and [Nergal](#). Within the house of Irkalla (Nergal), the house of darkness, the house of Ashes, no one ever exits. "They live on dust, their food is mud; their clothes are like birds' clothes, a garment of wings, and they see no light, living in blackness." It is full of dust and mighty kings serve others food. In Ereshkigal's court, heroes and priests reside, as well as [Sumuqan](#) and [Belit-tseri](#). The scorpion-people guard the gates in the mountain to the underworld which [Shamash](#) uses to enter and exit. There are seven gates, through which one must pass. At each gate, an adornment or article of clothing must be removed. The gates (gatekeepers?) are named: [Nedu](#), (En)kishar, Endashurimma, (E)nuralla, Endukuga/Nerubanda, Endushuba/Eundukuga, and Ennugigi. Beyond the gates are twelve double doors, wherein it is dark. [Siduri](#) waits there by the waters of death, beyond which, is the Land of the Living, where [Utnapishtim](#) and his wife dwell. Shamash and Utnapishtim's boatman, Urshanbi, can cross the waters. Egalginga, the everlasting palace, is a place where [Ishtar](#) was held.

## V. Hey! I read that Cthulhu is really some Babylonian or Sumerian god, how come he's not there under Kutu?

I have yet to find any secondary (or for that matter primary) source which lists Kutu as a Mesopotamian deity, or for that matter lists any name resembling Cthulhu at all. However, having been given a pointer by DanNorder@aol.com, I have confirmed that Kutha or Cutch was the cult city of [Nergal](#), the Akkadian god of plagues and the underworld (see above) and that 'lu' is the Sumerian word for man. So, Kuthalu would mean Kutha-man which could conceivably refer to Nergal. As far as I can tell it could mean Joe the Butcher or any of his neighbors who happen to live in Kutha just as easily. Nergal, of course bears little resemblance to Lovecraft's Cthulhu beyond the fact that both can be considered

underworld powers. Those interested in further discussion about this might wish to [contact Dan](#) at the above address and they may wish to read [alt.horror.cthulhu](#) as well.

## VI. So, in AD&D,

**[Tiamat](#) is this five-headed evil dragon, but they got her from the *Enuma Elish*, right? What about her counterpart, Bahamut?**

**Bahamut, according to Edgerton Sykes' *Who's Who of Non-Classical Mythology*, is "The enormous fish on which stands Kujara, the giant bull, whose back supports a rock of ruby, on the top of which stands an angel on whose shoulders rests the earth, according to Islamic myth. Our word Behemoth is of the same origin." (Sykes, p. 28)**

[Note: Sykes's use of the phrase "Islamic myth" is misleading as this bit of cosmology is not considered Islamic doctrine. Bahamut is pre-Islamic, most likely Arabic. I don't have a second source for Kujara.]

Behemoth then, is usually the male counterpart to Leviathan, and is a great beast that roams on land. He is sometimes equated with a hippopotamus, and is alternately listed in the Old Testament as a creature on the side of God and as one over whom God has or will triumph over.

## VII. I've heard there are Biblical parallels in Babylonian literature. What are they anyway?

Genesis: Creation of the universe

Ps:74:12-17 - YHWH vs. Leviathan; Marduk vs Tiamat. In the Enuma Elish, tablet IV, Marduk defeats the ocean goddess, Tiamat who is often depicted as a multi-headed dragon. He splits her apart, as YHWH splits apart the sea in Ps 74:13. He crushes her skull as YHWH crushes the skulls of the monster Leviathan in Ps 74:13-14. In tablet V, Marduk causes the crescent moon to appear, creates the seasons, the night and day, and creates springs from Tiamat's eyes, to form the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, as YHWH does in Ps 74:15-17 (Hooke p.106, Dalley pp.253-257)

Creation of humans.

Fall of man.

Adapa was the first "apkallu" (sage/priest), not the first man or first patriarch. He was given wisdom

(knowledge of good and evil?) but not immortality. When in heaven (sent there for having broken the South Wind's wing), he is offered bread and water of eternal life. He refuses it, however having been tricked by Ea (in serpent role?) stating that he would be offered the bread and water of death instead. (Dalley pp. 182-188) In other references to the seven apkallu, he is the counsellor paired with the first anteluvian king on the Sumerian king lists (Dalley p. 328), Alulim - not Alulim himself, who was Adam's analog in patriarchal order.

## Tower of Babel

As with the Sumerians, the most striking Biblical parallel within Akkadian myth is in the story of the flood. For the Babylonian account, see the entries on [Atrahasis](#) and Utnapishtim above.

Exodus - According to legend, Sargon was left in a basket in the Euphrates as an infant and "rose 'from an ark of bulrushes'" (Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* p. 101). His adoptive father was a "laborer in a palm garden who spotted the basket containing the remarkable child" (Crawford p. 42) Sargon was originally the cupbearer to a king (Ur-Zababa) before achieving leadership on his own. (Crawford p. 25)

Weeping for Tammuz and the month of Tammuz.

See also [Biblical Parallels in Sumerian Mythology](#)

## VIII. Where did you get this info and where can I find out more?

Well this FAQ is primarily derived from the following works:

- Barraclough, Geoffrey (ed.) *The Times Consise Atlas of World History*, Hammond Inc., Maplewood, New Jersey, 1982.
- Dalley, Stephanie *Myths from Mesopotamia*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991. This inexpensive volume served as the bible for much of this FAQ. It contains translations of the major Akkadian language myths with footnotes, brief introductions, and a glossary.
- Gardner, John & Maier, John *Gilgamesh: Translated from the Sin-Leqi-Unninni Version*, Vintage Books, Random House, New York, 1984. A column by column translation with notes and commentary following each column, by the late author of *Grendel*.
- Hooke, S. H., *Babylonian and Assyrian Religion*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman Oklahoma, 1963.
- Kinnier Wilson, J. V., *The Rebel Lands : an Investigation Into the Origins of Early Mesopotamian Mythology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- McCall, Henrietta, *Mesopotamian Myths* University of Texas Press, Austin, 1990. A summary account of Dalley's book with nice pictures more cultural context.
- Oppenheim, A. Leo, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, Chicato, The University of Chicago Press, 1977. This is the source for the history and culture of the



Babylonians and Assyrians for the interested lay-person.

- *The New American Bible*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 1970.

In addition the following books have occasionally proven helpful:

- Carlyon, Richard, *A Guide to the Gods*, Quill, William Morrow, New York, 1981.
- Hooke, S. H. *Middle Eastern Mythology*, Penguin Books, New York, 1963. This work covers Sumerian, Babylonian, Canaanite/Ugaritic, Hittite, and Hebrew mythologic material in brief and with comparisons.
- Jacobsen, Thorkild, *The Treasures of Darkness*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1976. A good alternative to Kramer, Jacobsen explores Mesopotamian religious development from early Sumerian times through the Babylonian Enuma Elish. Most of the book winds up being on the Sumerians.
- Pritchard, James B., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, with Supplement*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1969.
- Sykes, Edgerton, *Who's Who in Non-Classical Mythology*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993.

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Visit the [Sumerian Mythology FAQ?](#)

Visit the [Canaanite/Ugaritic Mythology FAQ?](#)

Visit the [Hittite Mythology REF?](#)

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At the request of a few people, I've written a brief sketch of the history of ancient Babylonia. I've written this article because JMS has mentioned that there may be many parallels between Babylon 5 and ancient Babylon; however, for the same reason, I have to be extensively careful not to turn this article into a bunch of what some people may consider "story ideas." In other words, I'm going to do my best to describe Babylonian history while not adding my ideas about how the history might relate to Babylon 5--these conclusions are up to you, as the reader, although I'll gladly discuss the topic anywhere but in alt.tv.babylon-5 (which JMS currently reads).

Note that this is =not= to serve as a complete history of Babylon (nor, in fact, anything even remotely close to a complete history). If anything, this is merely supposed to be a back-ground--an outline according to which Babylonian history actually developed. There are many historically important points which are not included here for reasons of space and clarity.

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Most scholars mark the beginning of Babylonian history with the rise of Hammurabi. However, I'm going to go back a little further and describe the setting upon which Hammurabi rose to power.

At the end of the 2000's B.C. (2050-2000), the great kingdom of Sumer was disintegrating at the hands of external invaders. Sumer had been a powerful kingdom in the western part of Asia, and it had roughly occupied the land that was one day to become Babylonia. After the ruling dynasty of Sumer fell, the cities of Larsa and Isin moved in to conquer. After hundreds of years, Larsa eventually defeated Isin.

However, just as Larsa defeated Isin, Hammurabi came to power in the city of Babylon. Hammurabi went on to defeat Larsa and establish a vast kingdom in the region formerly occupied by Sumer. However, as Sabatino Moscati explains in his famous book, =The Face of the Ancient Orient= (meaning the Near East), "The relationship between the Akkadins [the Babylonians and Assyrians] and the Sumerians is growing more and more like that which exists between the Romans and the Greeks ... the newer people is permeated with the older and superior culture ... and makes a cultural capitulation at the very moment of its political victory."

Hammurabi, needless to say, was a very capable military and

political leader; further, that the Hammurabi Code ("An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.") is still quoted today attests to its importance. Hammurabi's dynasty, otherwise referred to as the First Dynasty of Babylon, ruled for about 200 years, until 1530 B.C. Under the reign of this dynasty, Babylonia entered into a period of extreme prosperity and relative peace. As H.W.F. Saggs points out, however, in his book, =Everyday Life in Babylonia & Assyria=, "It would be a mistake to think of Babylon as the only city-state of significance at this period." Saggs goes on to quote a letter that was written around this period, which reads: "There is no king who of himself alone is strongest. Ten or fifteen kings follow Hammurabi of Babylon, the same number follow [Larsa], the same number follow [Eshnunna], the same number follow [Qatanum] ..." etc. Five kingdoms are listed, all of which are considered to be just about as powerful, except for one, which has twenty kings following it (rather than fifteen). Saggs also mentions another important city-state, the Mari. It was an outpost of Sumer, and "in the early second millennium B.C. was the capital of a kingdom extending over 200 miles along the river. In 1796 B.C., it experienced ... a change of dynasty [when Assyria took over]".

Also, importantly, as Moscati points out, in his book which I referred to before, "Under Hammurabi the two cultures which compose Mesopotamian civilization [the Assyrians and the Babylonians] achieve complete and harmonious fusion."

In the meantime, however, a tribe known as the Cassites (Kassites) began to attack Babylonia as early as the period when Hammurabi's son ruled the empire. Over the centuries, Babylonia was weakened by the Cassites. Finally, around 1530 B.C. (given in some sources as 1570 or 1595 B.C.), a Cassite Dynasty was set up in Babylonia. Saggs describes what seems to be a common trend--that the Cassites adopted many of their predecessors' customs.

The Mitanni, another culture, were meanwhile building their own powerful empire. Saggs refers to the Mitanni as having a "considerable, if temporary importance"--they were very powerful but were around for only about 150 years. Still, the Mitanni were one of the major empires of this area in this time period, and they came to almost completely control and subjugate the Assyrians (who were located directly to the east of Mitanni and to the northwest of Cassite Babylonia). I mention this because the Assyrians, after they finally broke free of the Mitanni (who were having political troubles of their own), were the next major power to assert themselves on Babylonia. Saggs again writes a very relevant line: "We have already seen that Assyria was for a time

actually a vassal of Mitanni [and was under pressure from other peoples]. The human response to this continual pressure was the development of a sturdy warlike people prepared to fight ruthlessly for their existence."

After defeating and virtually annexing Mitanni, the Assyrians, as I said, reasserted themselves on Babylonia. They weakened Babylonia so much that the Cassite Dynasty fell from power; the Assyrians virtually came to control Babylonia, until revolts in turn deposed them and set up a new dynasty, known as the Second Dynasty of Isin. Nebuchadnezzar the First, of this Dynasty, added a good deal of land to Babylonia and eventually came to attack Assyria. However, because of the influx of many nomadic tribes, Babylonia was eventually plunged into virtual anarchy. It stayed this way for more than 150 years.

Eventually, during the 800's B.C., one of the most powerful tribes outside Babylon, the Chaldeans (Latin Chaldaeus, Greek Khaldaios, Assyrian Kaldu), entered the scene. The Chaldeans rose to power in Babylonia and, by doing so, seem to have increased the stability and power of Babylonia. They fought off many revolts and aggressors. Chaldean influence was so strong that, during this period, Babylonia came to be known as "Chaldea"

In 626 B.C., the Chaldeans helped Nabopolassar to take power in Babylonia. At that time, Assyria was under considerable pressure from an Iranian people, the Medes (from Media). Nabopolassar allied Babylonia with the Medes. Assyria could not withstand this added pressure, and in 612 B.C., Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell. The entire city, once a great capital of a great empire, was burned and sacked.

Later, Nebuchadnezzar the Second (Nabopolassar's son) inherited the empire of Babylonia. He added quite a bit of territory to Babylonia and rebuilt Babylon, still the capital of Babylonia.

However, Babylonia did not hold together much after Nebuchadnezzar died; Nabonidus, the new king, could not seem to unite the various elements of Babylonian civilization. To quote =Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia=, "A somewhat enigmatic figure, he [Nabonidus] in some way antagonized the influential priestly class of Babylon."

Shortly after the end of Nabonidus's reign, the Persians moved in to conquer. Babylon fell, never to rise again. "And then the history of the ancient Mesopotamian empires in ended for ever" [Moscati].

For further reference:

H.W.F. Saggs has written a wonderful description of Babylonian and Assyrian culture and history entitled =Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria=.

Sabatino Moscati's classic book, =The Face of the Ancient Orient= (again, "Orient" refers here to the Middle/Near-East), is always helpful. His chapter on "The Babylonians and Assyrians" was particularly useful.

=Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia=, 1983, Volume 3 ("ASSIS-BERKS"), provides nice, albeit brief, outlines of both Assyrian and Babylonian histories. [Further, you only have to take out one volume. :) ]

These sources were used in the preparation of this document.

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