

# The Seven Tablets of Creation

(excerpts)

Translated by L.W. King (1902)

## The Ancient Babylonian Creation Myth

The ancient Babylonian creation myth, called the Enuma Elish, is one of the oldest known creation myths. The myth in the form represented here was found on seven clay tablets in the ruined library of Nineveh. The tablets are dated to roughly 650 BC; however, the myth roughly in this form is dated by the translator, the scholar L.W. King, to around 2000 BC. Other scholars date the myth to between 1100 and 1700 BC. The precursors to this form of the myth are undoubtedly many centuries older than this form. The creation myth is very interesting because it bears many similarities to other ancient Middle Eastern creation myths, including the ancient Egyptian and the story in Genesis of the Old Testament. The Babylonian myth tells of a struggle between Marduk, the chief god of Babylon, and Tiamat, the goddess of Chaos. The story begins with the waters of chaos. Apsu and Tiamat are the primeval god and goddess. The chaos goddess Tiamat is represented as a snake. Tiamat bears many other gods and goddesses. The children make a lot of noise, and Apsu wants to kill them. Apsu is killed. Tiamat wishes to kill her children, the gods and goddesses. Marduk offers to fight Tiamat if he is recognized as the supreme god, and the other gods and goddesses agree. Marduk defeats Tiamat, and tearing her body in half, he creates the sky and earth. Marduk later creates man from his own blood and bone. Man is created to worship and serve the gods.



The Stela of Hammurabi

### Tablet I

1. When in the height heaven was not named,
2. And the earth beneath did not yet bear a name,
3. And the primeval Apsû, who begat them,
4. And chaos, Tiamat, the mother of them both,—
5. Their waters were mingled together,
6. And no field was formed, no marsh was to be seen;
7. When of the gods none had been called into being,
8. And none bore a name, and no destinies [were ordained];
9. Then were created the gods in the midst of [heaven],
10. Lahmu and Lahamu were called into being [...].
11. Ages increased, [...],
12. Then Anshar and Kishar were created, and over them [...].
13. Long were the days, then there came forth [...]
14. Anu, their son, [...]
15. Anshar and Anu [...]
16. And the god Anu [...]
17. Nudimmud, whom his fathers [his] begetters [...]
18. Abounding in all wisdom, [...]

19. He was exceeding strong [...]
20. He had no rival [...]
21. (Thus) were established and [were ... the great gods (?)].
22. But T[iamat and Âpsû] were (still) in confusion [...],
23. They were troubled and [...]
24. In disorder(?) ... [...]
26. And Tiamat roared [...]
25. Apsû was not diminished in might [...]
27. She smote, and their deeds [...]
28. Their way was evil ... [...] ...
29. Then Apsû, the begetter of the great gods,
30. Cried unto Mummu, his minister, and said unto him:
31. "O Mummu, thou minister that rejoicest my spirit,
32. "Come, unto Tiamat let us [go]!"
33. So they went and before Tiamat they lay down,
34. They consulted on a plan with regard to the gods [their sons].
35. Apsû opened his mouth [and spake],
36. And unto Tiamat, the glistening one, he addressed [the word]:
37. "[...] their way [...],
38. "By day I cannot rest, by night [I cannot lie down (in peace)].
39. "But I will destroy their way, I will [...],
40. "Let there be lamentation, and let us lie down (again in peace)."
41. When Tiamat [heard] these words,
42. She raged and cried aloud [...].
43. [She ...] grievously [...],
44. She uttered a curse, and unto [Apsû she spake]:
45. "What then shall we [do]?"
46. "Let their way be made difficult, and let us [lie down (again) in peace]."
47. Mummu answered, and gave counsel unto Apsû,
48. [...] and hostile (to the gods) was the counsel Mu[mmu gave]:
49. "Come, their way is strong, but thou shalt destroy [it];
50. "Then by day shalt thou have rest, by night shalt thou lie down (in peace)."
51. Apsû [hearkened unto] him and his countenance grew bright,
52. [Since] he (i.e. Mummu) planned evil against the gods his sons.
- ...
60. Then Ea, who knoweth all that [is], went up and he beheld their muttering.
- ...
93. "[...] thy [...] he hath conquered and
94. " [...] he [weepeth] and sitteth in tribulation(?).
95. "[...] of fear,
96. "[...] we shall not lie down (in peace).
97. "[...] Apsû is laid waste(?),
98. "[...] and Mummu, who were taken captive, in [...]
99. "[...] thou didst, ...
100. "[...] let us lie down (in peace).
101. "[...] ... they will smite (?) [...].
102. " [...] let us lie down (in peace).
103. "[...] thou shalt take vengeance for them,

104. "[...]unto the tempest shalt thou [...]!"
105. [And Tiamat hearkened unto] the word of the bright god, (and said):
106. "[...] shalt thou entrust! let us wage [war]!"
- ...
109. [They banded themselves together and] at the side of Tiamat [they] advanced;
110. [They were furious, they devised mischief without resting] night and [day].
111. [They prepared for battle], fuming and raging;
112. [They joined their forces] and made war.
113. [Ummu-Hubu]r, who formed all things,
114. [Made in addition] weapons invincible, she spawned monster-serpents,
115. [Sharp of] tooth, and merciless of fang;
116. [With poison instead of] blood she filled [their] bodies.
117. Fierce [monster-vipers] she clothed with terror,
118. [With splendour] she decked them, [she made them] of lofty stature.
119. [Whoever beheld] them, terror overcame him,
120. Their bodies reared up and none could withstand [their attack].
121. [She set] up vipers, and dragons, and the (monster) [Laḥamu],
122. [And hurricanes], and raging hounds, and scorpion-men,
123. And mighty [tempests], and fish-men, and[rams];
124. [They bore] cruel weapons, without fear of [the fight].
125. Her commands [were mighty], [none] could resist them;
126. After this fashion, huge of stature, [she made] eleven (monsters).
127. Among the gods who were her sons, inasmuch as he had given [her support],
128. She exalted Kingu; in their midst [she raised] him [to power].
129. To march before the forces, to lead [the host],
130. To give the battle-signal, to advance to the attack,
131. To direct the battle, to control the fight,
132. Unto him she entrusted; in [costly raiment] she made him sit, (saying):
133. "I have uttered thy spell, in the assembly of the gods I have raised thee to power.
134. "The dominion over all the gods [have I entrusted unto him].
135. "Be thou exalted, thou my chosen spouse,
136. "May they magnify thy name over all [of them ... the Anunnaki]."
137. She gave him the Tablets of Destiny, on [his] breast she laid them, (saying):
138. "Thy command shall not be without avail, and[the word of thy mouth shall be established]."
139. Now Kingu, (thus) exalted, having received [the power of Anu],
140. [Decreed] the fate among the gods his sons, (saying):
141. "Let the opening of your mouth [quench] the Fire-god;
142. "Whoso is exalted in the battle, let him [display (his) might]!"

## Tablet II

1. Tiamat made weighty her handiwork,
2. [Evil] she wrought against the gods her children.
3. [To avenge] Apsû, Tiamat planned evil,
4. But how she had collected her [forces, the god ...] unto Ea divulged.
5. Ea [hearkened to] this thing, and
6. He was [grievous]ly afflicted and he sat in sorrow.
7. [The days] went by, and his anger was appeased,
8. And to [the place of] Anshar his father he took[his way].
9. [He went] and standing before Anshar, the father who begat him,
10. [All that] Tiamat had plotted he repeated unto him,
11. [Saying, "Ti]amat our mother hath conceived a hatred for us,
12. "With all her force she rageth, full of wrath.
13. "All the gods have turned to her,
14. "[With] those, whom ye created, they go at her side.
15. "They are banded together and at the side of Tiamat they advance;
16. "They are furious, they devise mischief without resting night and day.
17. "They prepare for battle, fuming and raging;
18. "They have joined their forces and are making war.
19. "Ummu-Hubur, who formed all things,
20. "Hath made in addition weapons invincible, she hath spawned monster-serpents,
21. "Sharp of tooth, and merciless of fang.
22. "With poison instead of blood she hath filled their bodies.
23. "Fierce monster-vipers she hath clothed with terror,
24. "With splendour she hath decked them, she hath made them of lofty stature.
25. "Whoever beholdeth them is overcome by terror,"
- ...
32. "After this fashion, huge of stature, hath she made eleven (monsters).
33. "Among the gods who are her sons, inasmuch as he hath given her support,
34. She hath exalted Kingu; in their midst she hath raised him to power.
35. "To march before the forces, to lead the host,
36. "To give the battle-signal, to advance to the attack,
37. "[To direct] the battle, to control the fight,
- ...
45. "[Now Kingu, (thus) exalted], having received the power of Anu,
46. "Decreed the fate [for the gods, her sons], (saying):
47. "'Let [the opening of your mouth] quench the Fire-god;
48. "'[Whoso is exalted in the battle], let him display (his) might!'"
49. [When Anshar heard how Tiamat] was mightily in revolt,
50. [...], he bit his lips,
51. [...], his mind was not at peace,
52. His [...], he made a bitter lamentation:
- ...
56. "[But Tiamat hath exalted Kin]gu, and where is one who can oppose her?"
57. [...] deliberation
- ...
- (72) [Anshar unto] his son addressed [the word]:
- (73) "[...] ... my mighty hero,

(74) "[Whose] strength [is great] and whose onslaught cannot be withstood,  
(75) "[Go] and stand before Tiamat,  
(76) "[That] her spirit [may be appeased], that her heart may be merciful.  
(77) "[But if] she will not hearken unto thy word,  
(78) "Our [word] shalt thou speak unto her, that she may be pacified."  
(79) [He heard the] word of his father Anshar  
(80) And [he directed] his path to her, towards her he took the way.  
(81) Anu [drew nigh], he beheld the muttering of Tiamat,  
(82) [But he could not withstand her], and he turned back.

...

### Tablet III

1. Anshar opened his mouth, and  
2. [Unto Gaga], his [minister], spake the word:  
3. "[O Gaga, thou minis]ter that rejoicest my spirit,  
4. "[Unto Lahmu and Lah]amu will I send thee.  
5. "[...] thou canst attain,  
6. "[...] thou shalt cause to be brought before thee.  
7. [... let] the gods, all of them,  
8. "[Make ready for a feast], at a banquet let them sit,  
9. "[Let them eat bread], let them mix wine,  
10. "[That for Marduk], their avenger, they may decree the fate.  
...  
53. "I sent Anu, but he could not withstand her;  
54. "Nudimmud was afraid and turned back.  
55. "But Marduk hath set out, the director of the gods, your son;  
56. "To set out against Tiamat his heart hath prompted (him).  
57. "He opened his mouth and spake unto me, (saying):  
58. "'If I, your avenger,  
59. "'Conquer Tiamat and give you life,  
60. "'Appoint an assembly, make my fate preeminent and proclaim it.  
61. "'In Upshukkinaku seat yourselves joyfully together;  
62. "'With my word in place of you will I decree fate.  
63. "'May whatsoever I do remain unaltered,  
64. "'May the word of my lips never be changed nor made of no avail.'  
65. "Hasten, therefore, and swiftly decree for him the fate which you bestow,  
66. "That he may go and fight your strong enemy!"  
...  
125. Lahmu and Lahamu heard and cried aloud,  
126. All of the Igigi wailed bitterly, (saying):  
127. "What has been altered so that they should ... [...]  
128. "We do not understand the d[eed] of Tiamat!"  
129. Then did they collect and go,  
130. The great gods, all of them, who decree [fate].  
131. They entered in before Anshar, they filled [...];  
132. They kissed one another, in the assembly [...].  
133. They made ready for the feast, at the banquet [they sat];  
134. They ate bread, they mixed [sesame-wine].

135. The sweet drink, the mead, confused their [...],
136. They were drunk with drinking, their bodies were filled.
137. They were wholly at ease, their spirit was exalted;
138. Then for Marduk, their avenger, did they decree the fate.

#### **Tablet IV**

1. They prepared for him a lordly chamber,
- 2 . Before his fathers as prince he took his place.
3. "Thou art chiefest among the great gods,
4. "Thy fate is unequalled, thy word is Anu!
5. "O Marduk, thou art chiefest among the great gods,
6. "Thy fate is unequalled, thy word is Anu!
7. "Henceforth not without avail shall be thy command,
8. "In thy power shall it be to exalt and to abase.
9. "Established shall be the word of thy mouth, irresistible shall be thy command;
10. "None among the gods shall transgress thy boundary.
11. "Abundance, the desire of the shrines of the gods,
12. "Shall be established in thy sanctuary, even though they lack (offerings).
13. "O Marduk, thou art our avenger!
14. "We give thee sovereignty over the whole world.
15. "Sit thou down in night, be exalted in thy command.
16. "Thy weapon shall never lose its power, it shall crush thy foe.
17. "O lord, spare the life of him that putteth his trust in thee,
18. "But as for the god who began the rebellion, pour out his life."
19. Then set they in their midst a garment,
20. And unto Marduk their first-born they spake:
21. "May thy fate, O lord, be supreme among the gods,
22. "To destroy and to create; speak thou the word, and (thy command) shall be fulfilled.
23. "Command now and let the garment vanish;
24. "And speak the word again and let the garment reappear!"
25. Then he spake with his mouth, and the garment vanished;
26. Again he commanded it, and the garment reappeared.
27. When the gods, his fathers, beheld (the fulfilment of) his word,
28. They rejoiced, and they did homage (unto him, saying), " Marduk is king! "
29. They bestowed upon him the sceptre, and the throne, and the ring,
30. They give him an invincible weapon, which overwhelmeth the foe.
31. "Go, and cut off the life of Tiamat,
32. "And let the wind carry her blood into secret places."
33. After the gods his fathers had decreed for the lord his fate,
34. They caused him to set out on a path of prosperity and success.
- 35 . He made ready the bow, he chose his weapon,
36. He slung a spear upon him and fastened it . . .
37. He raised the club, in his right hand he grasped (it),
38. The bow and the quiver he hung at his side.
39. He set the lightning in front of him,
40. With burning flame he filled his body.
41. He made a net to enclose the inward parts of Tiamat,
42. The four winds he stationed so that nothing of her might escape;

43. The South wind and the North wind and the East wind and the West wind  
44. He brought near to the net, the gift of his father Anu.  
45. He created the evil wind, and the tempest, and the hurricane,  
46. And the fourfold wind, and the sevenfold wind, and the whirlwind, and the wind which had no equal;  
47. He sent forth the winds which he had created, the seven of them;  
48. To disturb the inward parts of Tiamat, they followed after him.  
49. Then the lord raised the thunderbolt, his mighty weapon,  
50. He mounted the chariot, the storm unequalled for terror,  
51. He harnessed and yoked unto it four horses,  
52. Destructive, ferocious, overwhelming, and swift of pace;  
53. [...] were their teeth, they were flecked with foam;  
54. They were skilled in [...], they had been trained to trample underfoot.  
55. [...], mighty in battle,  
56. Left and [right ...  
57. His garment was [...], he was clothed with terror,  
58. With overpowering brightness his head was crowned.  
59. Then he set out, he took his way,  
60. And towards the [rag]ing Tiamat he set his face.  
61. On his lips he held [...],  
62. ... [...] he grasped in his hand.  
63. Then they beheld him, the gods beheld him,  
64. The gods his fathers beheld him, the gods beheld him.  
65. And the lord drew nigh, he gazed upon the inward parts of Tiamat,  
66. He perceived the muttering of Kingu, her spouse.  
67. As (Marduk) gazed, (Kingu) was troubled in his gait,  
68. His will was destroyed and his motions ceased.  
69. And the gods, his helpers, who marched by his side,  
70. Beheld their leader's [...], and their sight was troubled.  
71. But Tiamat [...], she turned not her neck,  
72. With lips that failed not she uttered rebellious words:  
73. "[...] thy coming as lord of the gods,  
74. "From their places have they gathered, in thy place are they!"  
75. Then the lord [raised] the thunderbolt, his mighty weapon,  
76. [And against] Tiamat, who was raging, thus he sent (the word):  
77. "[Thou] art become great, thou hast exalted thyself on high,  
78. "And thy [heart hath prompted] thee to call to battle.  
79. "[...] their fathers [...],  
80. "[...] their [...] thou hatest [...].  
81. "[Thou hast exalted King]u to be [thy] spouse,  
82. "[Thou hast . . . ] him, that, even as Anu, he should issue decrees.  
83. "[...] thou hast followed after evil,  
84. "And [against] the .gods my fathers thou hast contrived thy wicked plan.  
85. "Let then thy host be equipped, let thy weapons be girded on!  
86. "Stand! I and thou, let us join battle!"  
87. When Tiamat heard these words,  
88. She was like one possessed, she lost her reason.  
89. Tiamat uttered wild, piercing cries,  
90. She trembled and shook to her very foundations.

91. She recited an incantation, she pronounced her spell,  
92. And the gods of the battle cried out for their weapons.  
93. Then advanced Tiamat and Marduk, the counsellor of the gods;  
94. To the fight they came on, to the battle they drew nigh.  
95. The lord spread out his net and caught her,  
96. And the evil wind that was behind (him) he let loose in her face.  
97. As Tiamat opened her mouth to its full extent,  
98. He drove in the evil wind, while as yet she had not shut her lips.  
99. The terrible winds filled her belly,  
100. And her courage was taken from her, and her mouth she opened wide.  
101. He seized the spear and burst her belly,  
102. He severed her inward parts, he pierced (her) heart.  
103. He overcame her and cut off her life;  
104. He cast down her body and stood upon it.  
105. When he had slain Tiamat, the leader,  
106. Her might was broken, her host was scattered.  
107. And the gods her helpers, who marched by her side,  
108. Trembled, and were afraid, and turned back.  
109. They took to flight to save their lives;  
110. But they were surrounded, so that they could not escape.  
111. He took them captive, he broke their weapons;  
112. In the net they were caught and in the snare they sat down.  
113. The [...] ... of the world they filled with cries of grief.  
114. They received punishment from him, they were held in bondage.  
115. And on the eleven creatures which she had filled with the power of striking terror,  
116. Upon the troop of devils, who marched at her [...],  
117. He brought affliction, their strength [he ...];  
118. Them and their opposition he trampled under his feet.  
119. Moreover, Kingu, who had been exalted over them,  
120. He conquered, and with the god Dug-ga he counted him.  
121. He took from him the Tablets of Destiny that were not rightly his,  
122. He sealed them with a seal and in his own breast he laid them.  
123. Now after the hero Marduk had conquered and cast down his enemies,  
124. And had made the arrogant foe even like ...,  
125. And had fully established Anshar's triumph over the enemy,  
126. And had attained the purpose of Nudimmud,  
127. Over the captive gods he strengthened his durance,  
128. And unto Tiamat, whom he had conquered, he returned.  
129. And the lord stood upon Tiamat's hinder parts,  
130. And with his merciless club he smashed her skull.  
131. He cut through the channels of her blood,  
132. And he made the North wind bear it away into secret places.  
133. His fathers beheld, and they rejoiced and were glad;  
134. Presents and gifts they brought unto him.  
135. Then the lord rested, gazing upon her dead body,  
136. While he divided the flesh of the ..., and devised a cunning plan.  
137. He split her up like a flat fish into two halves;  
138. One half of her he established as a covering for heaven.

139. He fixed a bolt, he stationed a watchman,
140. And bade them not to let her waters come forth.
141. He passed through the heavens, he surveyed the regions (thereof),
142. And over against the Deep he set the dwelling of Nudimmud.
143. And the lord measured the structure of the Deep,
144. And he founded E-shara, a mansion like unto it.
145. The mansion E-shara which he created as heaven,
146. He caused Anu, Bêl, and Ea in their districts to inhabit.

#### **Tablet V**

1. He.(i.e. Marduk) made the stations for the great gods;
  2. The stars, their images, as the stars of the Zodiac, he fixed.
  3. He ordained the year and into sections he divided it;
  4. For the twelve months he fixed three stars.
  5. After he had [...] the days of the year [...] images,
  6. He founded the station of Nibir to determine their bounds;
  7. That none might err or go astray,
  8. He set the station of Bêl and Ea along with him.
  9. He opened great gates on both sides,
  10. He made strong the bolt on the left and on the right.
  11. In the midst thereof he fixed the zenith;
  12. The Moon-god he caused to shine forth, the night he entrusted to him.
  13. He appointed him, a being of the night, to determine the days;
  14. Every month without ceasing with the crown he covered(?) him, (saying):
  15. "At the beginning of the month, when thou shinest upon the land,
  16. "Thou commandest the horns to determine six days,
  17. "And on the seventh day to [divide] the crown.
  18. "On the fourteenth day thou shalt stand opposite, the half [...].
  19. "When the Sun-god on the foundation of heaven [...] thee,
  20. "The [...] thou shalt cause to ..., and thou shalt make his [...].
  21. "[...] ... unto the path of the Sun-god shalt thou cause to draw nigh,
  22. "[And on the ... day] thou shalt stand opposite, and the Sun-god shall ... [...]
  23. "[...] to traverse her way.
  24. "[...] thou shalt cause to draw nigh, and thou shalt judge the right.
- ...

#### **Tablet VI**

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

## Tablet VII

1. O Asari, "Bestower of planting," "[Founder of sowing],"
2. "Creator of grain and plants," "who caused [the green herb to spring up]!"
3. O Asaru-alim, "who is revered in the house of counsel," "[who aboundeth in counsel],"
4. The gods paid homage, fear [took hold upon them]!
5. O Asaru-alim-nuna, "the mighty one," "the Light of [the father who begat him],"
6. Who directeth the decrees of Anu, Bel, [and Ea]!"
7. He was their patron, he ordained [their . . . .];
8. He, whose provision is abundance, goeth forth [...]!
9. Tutu [is] "He who created them anew;"
10. Should their wants be pure, then are they [satisfied];
11. Should he make an incantation, then are the gods [appeased];
12. Should they attack him in anger, he withstandeth [their onslaught]!
13. Let him therefore be exalted, and in the assembly of the gods [let him ...];
14. None among the gods can [rival him]!
15. Tutu is Zi-ukkina, "the Life of the host [of the gods],"
16. Who established for the gods the bright heavens.
17. He set them on their way, and ordained [their path (?)]
18. Never shall his [...] deeds be forgotten among men.
19. Tutu as Zi-azag thirdly they named, "the Bringer of Purification,"
20. "The God of the Favouring Breeze," "the Lord of Hearing and Mercy,"
21. "The Creator of Fulness and Abundance," "the Founder of Plenteousness,"
22. "Who increaseth all that is small."
23. "In sore distress we felt his favouring breeze,"
24. Let them say, let them pay reverence, let them bow in humility before him!
25. Tutu as Aga-azag may mankind fourthly magnify!
26. "The Lord of the Pure Incantation," "the Quickener of the Dead,"
27. "Who had mercy upon the captive gods,"
28. "Who removed the yoke from upon the gods his enemies,"
29. "For their forgiveness did he create mankind,"
30. "The Merciful One, with whom it is to bestow life!"
31. May his deeds endure, may they never be forgotten

...