

Sin-leqqi-unninni, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablets 6, 7, 8
Wesley Advocates **26 February 2017**

VI

Please note that this tablet lacks the conventional division into columns. Why?

Why must Gilgamesh and Enkidu undergo ritual purification? What precisely do they do?

What about Gilgamesh catches Ishtar's attention? Who is she? What does she want from him? What does Ishtar offer Gilgamesh?

Describe Gilgamesh's response to Ishtar. What is so utterly insulting about the song he sings to her? Specifics? Indeed, what has happened to other men Ishtar has desired? List details.

How does she respond when thwarted? What does she demand of Anu? If he fails to help as she requires, what will Ishtar do?

How do the behaviors of these gods both parallel and differ from those we read about in Homer?

What do we see in Figure 25?

What happens to Uruk and Uruk's citizens when the Bull of Heaven comes from Anu? How exactly do Enkidu and Gilgamesh subdue and destroy the Bull?

In particular, how does Enkidu insult Ishtar after they slay the Bull?

How does the poet emphasize the Bull of Heaven's size, power, and beauty?

Why another ritual cleansing near the end of this tablet? After the cleansing, what do Enkidu and Gilgamesh do? Why is that important?

Describe Enkidu's dream.

VII. i

Why must Enkidu rather than Gilgamesh die? How exactly does Enkidu die, and why is that death shameful to him?

VII. iii

During his illness and dying, Enkidu rants against what and whom? How does Shamash chide Enkidu about this behavior and bitterness? Be specific. How does Enkidu respond?

What has Enkidu gained in his lifetime?

VII. iv

According to Enkidu's dreams, what will he experience after dying? Who is Irkalla? Why is it appropriate among Sumerians that death be described as follows:

There is a road leading away from
bright and lively life.
There dwell those who eat dry dust
and have no cooling water to quench their awful thirst.

From whom does Gilgamesh seek comfort when he sees Enkidu dying? Why?

Again, why does Enkidu believe he has lost honor because of this way of dying?

VIII. i

Note the lack of factual consistency between what Gilgamesh says of Enkidu's life and kin during the ritual lament and what we know of Enkidu from earlier in this poem. Cite two or three contradictions. Why do these contradictions occur? What do they matter?

Again we see the poet's use of the pathetic fallacy—here in the ritual lament. Both humankind and nature mourn for Enkidu. All the world grieves at his loss. How does the poet enhance Enkidu's value and Gilgamesh's grief through describing others' sorrow?

How do the rivers grieve? The animals Enkidu once knew? The citizens of Uruk and even of Eridu? Note the uses of catalogue.

What do we see in Figure 26?

Where will Gilgamesh take Enkidu for burial?

VIII. ii

Where does Gilgamesh use visual imagery to describe his closeness to Enkidu? How do these images recall to us the dreams in Tablets I and II? What about auditory imagery to describe his grief?

What lines or passages do you find most compelling in Gilgamesh's lament?

What does Gilgamesh mean when he says about line 95, "I hear the voice of grief and I know that you have been taken somewhere by death"? about line 125, "What state of being holds you now? Are you lost forever? Do you hear my song?"

Gilgamesh calls on everyone and everything in the universe to weep—but all traditional mourning proves inadequate. Why?

How does he prepare Enkidu's body for presentation on the bier?

VIII. iii

Why does Gilgamesh leave Enkidu's body out on a bier? What resolutions does Gilgamesh offer about his continued mourning? Why does Gilgamesh feel guilt? (Think of the parallels with Achilles and Patroklos.)

VIII. v

How many days have passed since Enkidu's death?

Who are the Annunaki, and what do they do?

After Gilgamesh's ritual cleansing (again), this time in the river where he can see his face, he is prepared for the funeral rites. What specific offerings does he prepare for the gods to honor Enkidu? Note the visual and tactile imagery.

Why pray to Shamash?