

Sin-leqqi-unninni, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablets 9 and 10
Wesley Advocates **12 March 2017**

IX. i

What do we see in Figure 27?

Why does Gilgamesh wander restlessly? Why does he think of visiting Utnapishtim in Dilmun?

Why does he kill lions and other beasts? What is the significance of his using the ax?

IX. ii

Gilgamesh travels east into the Zagros Mountains (seeking Utnapishtim in the east, where the sun rises) and comes to the base of Mount Mashu. Who guards the mountain pass? And how do the guards treat Gilgamesh? Why does Gilgamesh “not dare to look” upon their threat?

Describe the conversation between the guards and Gilgamesh.

IX. iii

Why do the guards find Gilgamesh remarkable? What might happen to Gilgamesh if they fought him or denied him passage? Why is this imagery particularly appropriate for Gilgamesh?

IX. iv

What does *heartache* *pain* signify?

Describe the tunnel Gilgamesh enters to pass through the mountains. Why is the imagery so important for expressing Gilgamesh’s spiritual journey as well as the physical one?

What do we see in Figure 28?

IX. v

The visual and tactile imagery continues: what does it reveal about Gilgamesh's trials, his frame of mind, his grief, his exile? What is he exiled from?

IX. vi

Leaving the dark, dark, frozen tunnel, Gilgamesh reaches a shoreline fresh with dew and there meets a woman who knows the secrets of the sea—and much, much more.

X. i

Siduri is one of the most important women in ancient literature. Characterize her: what does she do? What are these “lifesaving drinks” she gives men? Why does she bolt herself inside her house to avoid Gilgamesh? Why does he especially need these “drinks that refresh the soul”?

What does she represent in this quest? Why does Gilgamesh not believe her wisdom at first? How does the poet describe Gilgamesh's physical condition when he first meets Siduri? What consumes him? How does he describe his grief, his loss?

X.ii

Why must Gilgamesh recite his past again? How does the poet express Gilgamesh's obsession with death and mortality? What causes the constant restlessness?

What does Gilgamesh ask from Siduri? And how does she respond initially? Why? What happens to men who try to achieve this quest?

X. iii

Note the poet's repetition of “she whose drinks refresh the soul.” Why so much repetition?

In this crucial exchange--lines 85-108, Siduri attempts to teach Gilgamesh about mortality, about human-being-ness. Think about how

Gilgamesh's encounter with Siduri in Tablet X parallels Enkidu's meeting with Shamhat in Tablet II; list five or six parallels. What does the poet stress?

First, what exact wisdom does she impart about what human beings should do? About what Gilgamesh himself—and all of us—should focus on? Second, what does she tell us about immortality, both that enjoyed by the gods and that left to Utnapishtim—and how do they differ? She says it is the will of the gods for humankind to do what?

What do we see in Figure 29?

What does Siduri advise Gilgamesh to do with regard specifically to Utnapishtim?

Who is Urshanabi, and how can he help Gilgamesh? Why must Gilgamesh cross the Sea of Death to reach Utnapishtim in Dilmun? What Greek and Roman figure parallels Urshanabi?

How does Urshanabi greet Gilgamesh? What does he observe immediately about the king from Uruk?

Why must Gilgamesh recite, again, his story about Enkidu and that loss? How does he evaluate their achievements?

What does he reveal about his concerns in lines 145-155? Be specific.

When Gilgamesh asks Urshanabi for directions and help reaching Utnapishtim, why exactly does Urshanabi object? What has Gilgamesh done to make him unfit for this journey—and for even seeking immortality?

What penance must Gilgamesh perform? Why is that significant?

X. iv

How does the poet stress the difficulty of this journey across the Sea of Death? What, for instance, happens to the oars?

What do we see in Figure 30?

When Utnapishtim first espies Gilgamesh, how does he respond?

X. v

What difficulties does Gilgamesh recite to Utnapishtim? Why?
Why do these difficulties fail to move Utnapishtim? What does he say in response?

X. vi

What does Utnapishtim know about Death?

How can we distinguish sleep from death?

What do the Anunnaki do? Where? How do they parallel the Moirai from Greek mythology? Why do human beings like to believe some supernatural entity determines the lengths of our lives?

Who is Mother Chance?