

Gilgamesh and the Netherworld
Or
In those Days, In those Far-Off Days
(Manuscript of Tel Haddad)

In those days,
In those far-off days.

In those nights,
In those distant nights.

In those years,
In those far-off years.

In olden times, after what was needed had become manifest,
In olden times, after what was needed had been taken care of.

After bread had been swallowed in the sanctuaries of the land,
After the ovens of the land had been fired up with bellows.

After heaven had been parted from earth,
After earth had been separated from heaven.

After the name of mankind had been established:

Then, after the God An had taken the Heavens for himself,
After he had presented the Netherworld to the Goddess Ereshkigal as a dowry-gift.

After he had set sail,
After The Father had set sail for the Netherworld.

After he had set sail,
After the God Enki had set sail for the Netherworld.

A On The Lord, the small ones poured down,
B On Enki, the big ones poured down.

A The small ones were hailstones the size of a hand,
B The big ones were hailstones that made the reed jump into the lap of Enki's boat;
they poured in a heap like a surging turtle.

At The Lord, the water at the front of the boat snapped all around like a wolf,
At Enki, the water at the back of the boat flailed like a murderous lion.

At that time there was a solitary tree:

A solitary willow,
A solitary tree.

Growing on the bank of the Holy Euphrates.
Drinking water from the River Euphrates.

The might of the South Wind tore it out at the roots and snapped off its branches,
The water of the Euphrates washed over it.

The woman who respects the Word of An,
The woman who respects the Word of Enlil.

Picked up the tree in her hand and took it into Uruk,
Took it into the Pure Garden of Inanna-Ishtar.

A The woman did not plant the tree with her hand,
B She planted it with her foot.

A The woman did not water the tree with her hand,
B She watered it with her foot.

She said, "How long until I sit on a pure throne?"
She said, "How long until I lie on a pure bed?"

After five years had gone by,
After ten years had gone by.

The tree had grown stout,
Its bark had not split.

In its base a Snake-that-Knows-No-Charm had made its nest,
In its branches a Thunderbird had hatched its brood,
In its trunk a Demon-Maiden had built her home; the maiden who laughs with happy heart.

Holy Inanna-Ishtar wept:

Day was dawning,
The horizon brightening.

Birds were singing in chorus to the dawn,
The Sun God came forth from his chamber.

His sister, the Holy Inanna-Ishtar, spoke to Young Hero Shamash:

“O brother, in those days:

After destinies were determined,
When the land flowed with abundance.

When An had made off with the Heavens,
Enlil had made off with the earth; he had given the Netherworld to
Ereshkigal as a dowry gift.

After he had set sail,
After the Father had set sail for the Netherworld.

After he had set sail,
After Enki had set sail for the Netherworld.

On The Lord, the small ones poured down,
On Enki, the big ones poured down.

The small ones were hailstones the size of a hand,
The big ones were hailstones that made the reed jump into the lap of
Enki’s boat; they poured in a heap like a surging turtle.

At The Lord, the water at the front of the boat snapped all around like a wolf,
At Enki, the water at the back of the boat flailed like a murderous lion.

At that time, there was a solitary tree:

A solitary willow,
A solitary tree.

Growing on the back of the Holy Euphrates,
Drinking water from the River Euphrates.

The might of the South Wind tore it out at the roots and snapped off its
branches,
The water of the Euphrates washed over it.

I, the woman who respects the Word of An,
I, who respects The Word of Enlil.

I picked up the tree in my hand and took it into Uruk,
I took it into The Pure Garden of Inanna-Ishtar.

A I, the woman, did not plant the tree with my hand,
B I planted it with my foot.

A I, Inanna-Ishtar, did not water the tree with my hand,
B I watered it with my foot.

I said, 'How long until I sit on a pure throne?'
I said, 'How long until I lie on a pure bed?'

After five years had gone by,
After ten years had gone by.

The tree had grown stout,
Its bark had not split.

In its base a Snake-that-Knows-No-Charms had made its nest,
In its branches a Thunderbird had hatched its brood,
In its trunk a Demon-Maiden had built her home; the maiden who laughs
with happy heart."

Holy Inanna-Ishtar wept, her brother, Young Hero Shamash, did not help her in this matter:

Day was dawning,
The horizon brightening.

Birds were singing in chorus to the dawn,
The Sun God came forth from his chamber.

His sister, the Holy Inanna-Ishtar, spoke to the warrior Gilgamesh:

"O brother, in those days:

After destinies were determined,
When the land flowed with abundance.

When An had made off with the Heavens,
Enlil had made off with the earth; he had given the Netherworld to
Ereshkigal as a dowry gift.

After he had set sail,
After the Father had set sail for the Netherworld.

After he had set sail,
After Enki had set sail for the Netherworld.

On The Lord, the small ones poured down,
On Enki, the big ones poured down.

The small ones were hailstones the size of a hand,
The big ones were hailstones that made the reed jump into the lap of
Enki's boat; they poured in a heap like a surging turtle.

At The Lord, the water at the front of the boat snapped all around like a
wolf,
At Enki, the water at the back of the boat flailed like a murderous lion.

At that time, there was a solitary tree:

A solitary willow,
A solitary tree.

Growing on the back of the Holy Euphrates,
Drinking water from the River Euphrates.

The might of the South Wind tore it out at the roots and snapped off its
branches,
The water of the Euphrates washed over it.

I, the woman who respects The Word of An,
I, who respects The Word of Enlil.

I picked up the tree in my hand and took it into Uruk,
I took it into The Pure Garden of Inanna-Ishtar.

A I, the woman, did not plant the tree with my hand,
B I planted it with my foot.

A I, Inanna-Ishtar, did not water the tree with my hand,
B I watered it with my foot.

I said, 'How long until I sit on a pure throne?'
I said, 'How long until I lie on a pure bed?'

After five years had gone by,
After ten years had gone by.

The tree had grown stout,
Its bark had not split.

In its base a Snake-that-Knows-No-Charm had made its nest,
In its branches a Thunderbird had hatched its brood,
In its trunk a Demon-Maiden had built her home; the maiden who laughs
with happy heart.

Holy Inanna-Ishtar wept, his sister having spoken thus to him; her brother helped her in this matter:

He girt his loins with a kilt of fifty minas; treating fifty minas like thirty shekels.
His bronze axe for expeditions, the one of seven talents and seven minas, he took up in his
hand.

In its base the Snake-That-Knows-No-Charm he smote,
In its branches the Thunderbird gathered up its brood and went into the mountains.
In its trunk the Demon-Maiden abandoned her home and fled to the wastelands.

As for the tree:

He tore it out at the roots,
He snapped off its branches.

The sons of his city who had come with him lopped off its branches; lashed them together.
To his sister, Holy Inanna-Ishtar, he gave wood for her throne.

For himself, its base he made into his ball,
Its branches he made into his mallet.

Playing with the ball he took it out in the city square,
Playing with the mallet he took it out in the city square.

The young men of his city began playing with the ball,
With him mounted piggy-back on a band of widow's sons.

O my neck! He groaned,
O my hips! He groaned.

The son who had a mother, she brought him bread,
The brother who had a sister, she poured him water.

When evening was approaching he drew a mark where his ball had been placed,
He lifted it up before him and carried it off to his house.

At dawn where he had made the mark, he mounted piggy-back:

The widows grieved,
The young girls cried out.

His ball and his mallet both fell down to the bottom of the Netherworld,
With all his might he could not reach them.

He used his hand, but he could not reach them,
He used his foot, but he could not reach them.

**At the Gate of Ganzir, the entrance to the Netherworld, he took a sea, racked with sobs
Gilgamesh began to weep:**

“O my ball!
O my mallet!

O my ball, which I have not enjoyed to the full!
O my mallet, with which I have not had my fill of play!

**On this day, if only my ball had stayed for me in the carpenter’s
workshop:**

O carpenter’s wife, like a mother to me, If only it had stayed there!
O carpenter’s daughter, like a little sister to me, if only it had stayed
there!

My ball has fallen down to the Netherworld; who will bring it up for
me?
My mallet has fallen down to Ganzir; who will bring it up for me?”

His servant Enkidu answered him:

“My Lord, why are you weeping?
My Lord, why are you sick at heart?

This day I, myself, will bring your ball up for you from the Netherworld,
This day I, myself, will bring your mallet up for you from Ganzir!”

Gilgamesh spoke to Enkidu:

“If this day you are going down to the Netherworld:

I will give you instructions; you should follow my instructions,
I will tell you a word; give ear to my word!

- A Do not dress in a clean garment,
 - B They would surely take it as the sign of a stranger!
- A Do not anoint yourself in sweet oil from a flask,
 - B At the scent of it they will surely surround you!
- A Do not hurl a throwstick in the Netherworld,
 - B Those struck by the throwstick will surely surround you!
- A Do not hold a cornel rod in your hand,
 - B The shades will tremble before you!
- A Do not wear sandals on your feet,
 - B It will surely make the Netherworld shake!
- A Do not kiss the wife you loved,
- A Do not strike the wife you hated,
- A Do not kiss the son you loved,
- A Do not strike the son you hated,
 - B The outcry of the Netherworld will seize you!
- A To the one who lies,
- A To the one who lies to the Mother of Ninazu,
 - B No garment covers her shining shoulders,
 - B No linen is spread over her shining breast.
 - C Her fingernails she wields like a rake,
 - C She wrenches her hair out like leeks.”

Enkidu paid no attention to the word of his master:

- A He dressed in a clean garment,
 - B They took it as the sign of a stranger.
- A He anointed himself in sweet oil from the flask,
 - B At the scent of it they surrounded him.

A He hurled a throwstick in the Netherworld,
B Those struck by the throwstick surrounded him.

A He held a cornel rod in his hand,
B The shakes did tremble before him.

A He wore sandals on his feet,
B It made the Netherworld shake.

A He kissed the wife he loved,
A He struck the wife he hated,
A He kissed the son he loved,
A He struck the son he hated,
B The outcry of the Netherworld seized him.

A To the one who lies,
A To the one who lies to the Mother of Ninazu,
B No garment covers her shining shoulders,
B No linen is spread over her shining breast.
C Her fingernails she wields like a rake,
C She wrenches her hair out like leeks.

From that wicked day, to the seventh day thence; from the Netherworld, his servant Enkidu, came not forth. The king uttered a wail and wept bitter tears:

“A My favourite servant,
A My steadfast companion,
A The one who counselled me,
B The Netherworld seized him!

A Namtar did not seize him,
A Azag did not seize him,
B The Netherworld seized him!

A Nergal's pitiless sheriff did not seize him,
B The Netherworld seized him!

A He did not fall in battle; the field of men,
B The Netherworld seized him!”

The warrior Gilgamesh, son of the Goddess Ninsun, made his way alone to Ekur, the House of Enlil, before the God Enlil he wept:

“O Father Enlil:

My ball fell into the Netherworld,
My mallet fell into Ganzir.

Enkidu went to bring it up and the Netherworld seized him,
My favourite servant, my steadfast companion, the one who counselled me, the
Netherworld seized him!

A Namtar did not seize him,
A Azag did not seize him,
B The Netherworld seized him!

A Nergal’s pitiless sheriff did not seize him,
B The Netherworld seized him!

A He did not fall in battle; the field of men,
B The Netherworld seized him!”

**Father Enlil did not help in this matter; Gilgamesh went to Ur, he made his way alone to Ur,
the House of Sin, before the God Sin he wept:**

“O Father Sin:

My ball fell into the Netherworld,
My mallet fell into Ganzir.

Enkidu went to bring it up and the Netherworld seized him,
My favourite servant, my steadfast companion, the one who counselled me, the
Netherworld seized him!

A Namtar did not seize him,
A Azag did not seize him,
B The Netherworld seized him!

A Nergal’s pitiless sheriff did not seize him,
B The Netherworld seized him!

A He did not fall in battle; the field of men,
B The Netherworld seized him!”

**Father Sin did not help him in this matter; Gilgamesh went to Eridu, he made his way alone to
Eridu, the House of Enki, before the God Enki he wept:**

“O Father Enki:

My ball fell into the Netherworld,
My mallet fell into Ganzir.

Enkidu went to bring it up and the Netherworld seized him,
My favourite servant, my steadfast companion, the one who counselled me, the
Netherworld seized him!

A Namtar did not seize him,
A Azag did not seize him,
B The Netherworld seized him!

A Nergal’s pitiless sheriff did not seize him,
B The Netherworld seized him!

A He did not fall in battle; the field of men,
B The Netherworld seized him!”

Father Enki helped him in this matter, he spoke to Young Hero Shamash, the son born of Ningal:

“Now, when as the Sun God, you make an opening in the Netherworld, bring his
servant up to him from the Netherworld,

He made an opening in the Netherworld, by means of his phantom, he brought
his servant up to him from the Netherworld.”

Gilgamesh hugged Enkidu tight and kissed him, in asking and answering they made themselves weary:

“Did you see the way things are ordered in the Netherworld?
If only you could tell me, my friend, if only you could tell me?”

If I am to tell you the way things are ordered in the Netherworld:

“O sit you down and weep!
Then let me sit down and weep!

The one whom you embraced with joy in your heart, he says, “I am going to ruin”:

Like an old garment he is infested with lice,
Like a crack in the floor he is filled with dust.

Ah, woe! cried The Lord, and he sat down in the dust:

A “Did you see the man with one son?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “For the peg built into this wall bitterly he laments.”

A “Did you see the man with two sons?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “Seated on two bricks he eats a bread-loaf.”

A “Did you see the man with three sons?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “He drinks water from the waterskin slung on the saddle.”

A “Did you see the man with four sons?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “Like a man with a team of four donkeys his heart rejoices.”

A “Did you see the man with five sons?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “Like a fine scribe with a nimble hand he enters the palace with ease.”

A “Did you see the man with six sons?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “Like a man with ploughs in harness his heart rejoices.”

A “Did you see the man with seven sons?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “Among the junior deities he sits on a throne and listens to the proceedings.”

A “Did you see the man with no heir?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “He eats a bread-loaf like a kiln-fired brick.”

A “Did you see the palace eunuch?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “Like a useless alala-stick he is propped in a corner.”

A “Did you see the woman who had not given birth?”

B “I saw her.”

C “How does she fare?”

D “Like a defective pot she is cast aside, no man takes pleasure in her.”

A “Did you see the young man who had not bared the lap of his wife?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “You have him finish a hand-worked rope, he weeps over it.”

A “Did you see the young woman who had not bared the lap of her husband?”

B “I saw her.”

C “How does she fare?”

D “You have her finish a hand-worked reed mat, she weeps over it.”

A “Did you see the leper?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

**D “His food is set apart, his drink is set apart, he eats uprooted grass,
he roots for water in the ground, he lives outside the city.”**

A “Did you see the man afflicted by pellagra?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “He twitches like an ox as the maggots consume him.”

A “Did you see the man eaten by a lion?”

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “Bitterly he cries, “O my hand! O my foot!”

A “Did you see the person who fell from a roof?”

B “I saw him”

C “How does he fare?”

**D “They cannot repair his bones, he twitches like an ox as the maggots
consume him.”**

- A **“Did you see the man whom the Storm God drowned in a flood?”**
 B “I saw him.”
 C “How does he fare?”
 D “He twitches like an ox as the maggots consume him.”
- A **“Did you see the man who did not respect the word of his mother and father?”**
 B “I saw him.”
 C “How does he fare?”
 D He drinks water weighed out in a scale, he never gets enough.”
- A **“Did you see the man accursed by his mother and father?”**
 B “I saw him.”
 C “How does he fare?”
 D He is deprived of an heir, his ghost still roams.”
- A **“Did you see the man fallen in battle?”**
 B “I saw him”
 C “How does he fare?”
 D “His father and mother cradle his head, his wife weeps.”
- A **“Did you see the shade of him who has no one to make funerary offerings?”**
 B “I saw him.”
 C “How does he fare?”
 D “ He eats scrapings from the pot and crusts of bread thrown away in the street.”
- A **“Did you see the man struck by a mooring pole?”**
 B “I saw him.”
 C “How does he fare?”
 D “Let a man only say, “O my mother!”, and with rib torn-out in agony, the top part only he eats of his daily bread.”
- A **“Did you see the little stillborn babies, who knew not names of their own?”**
 B “I saw them.”
 C “How do they fare?”
 D “They play amid syrup and ghee at tables of silver and gold.”
- A **“Did you see the man who dies a martyr’s death?”**
 B “I saw him.”
 C “How does he fare?”
 D “He lies on the bed of the gods.”

A **“Did you see the man who was burnt to death?”**

B “I did not see him.”

D “His ghost was not there, his smoke went up to the skies.”

A The King’s heart was stricken,

B His mind despaired.

A He searched for life,

B The Lord to the Living One’s Mountain did turn his mind.

A **“Did you see the one who cheated a god and swore an oath?”**

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “He cannot get near the places in the Netherworld where the libations of water are made, he drinks in thirst.”

A **“Did you see the citizen of Girsu, at the Place of Sighs, of his father and mother?”**

B “I saw him.”

C “How does he fare?”

D “Facing each man there are a thousand Amorites, his shade cannot push them off with his hands, he cannot charge them down with his chest, at the places in the Netherworld where the libations of water are made, the Amorite takes precedence.”

A **“Did you see the sons of Sumer and Akkad?”**

B “I saw them.”

C “How do they fare?”

D “They drink water from the place of a massacre; dirty water.”

A **“Did you see where my father and mother dwell?”**

B “I saw them.”

C “How do they fare?”

D “The two of them drink water from the place of a massacre; dirty water.”

He sent them back to Uruk,
He sent them back to his city.

Gear and equipment, he put away in the store,
Hatchet and spear, he put away in the store.

He made merry in his palace,
The young men and women of Uruk, the worthies and matrons of Kullab, looked upon those statues and
their hearts rejoiced.

**He lifted his head to the Sun God coming forth from his chamber; he issued instructions, "O my father
and my mother, I will have you drink clear water":**

The day was not half gone, Gilgamesh performed the mourning rites,
For nine days he performed the mourning rites; the young men and women of Uruk, the worthies and
matrons of Kullab, wept.

"O my father and my mother, I will have you drink clear water!
O Warrior Gilgamesh, son of the Goddess Ninsun, sweet is your praise!"