

The Epic of Gilgamesh and the Deluge

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We have all heard of the story of Noah and the Ark. It may be read in the Bible, Genesis, Chapters 6 through 9. The story begins:

“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them . . . that the sons of God saw the daughters of man, that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose . . .

“There were giants in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men, which were of old, men of renown . . . and God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually . . . but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord . . .”

The rest, of course is history, about the building of the Ark and the Deluge . . . but sometimes one may wonder who wrote this history, or what the real story was. We may never know the ‘real story.’ We do have the one from the Bible, but there is a strikingly similar story recorded on Sumerian/Akkadian Tablets, before our printed Bible came into our hands (7th Century BC).

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is an epic poem from Ancient Mesopotamia and is among the earliest known works of literary “fiction”. Scholars believe that it originated as a series of Sumerian legends and poems about the mythological hero-king Gilgamesh, which were gathered into a longer Akkadian poem much later; the most complete version existing today is preserved on 12 clay tablets in the library collection of the 7th century BCE Assyrian king Ashurbanipal. It was originally titled *He who Saw the Deep* (*Sha naqba imuru*) or *Surpassing All Other Kings* (*Shūtur eli sharrī*). Gilgamesh might have been a real ruler in the late Early Dynastic II period (ca. 27th century BC).

Ref: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_of_Gilgamesh

In the extract of the Epic of Gilgamesh on the following pages, the ‘essential’ plot of this version of the story of the deluge is set in blue type for ease of reading or reference . . .

Science continues to peel back the accretions of written and physical history. The prevailing rumor is that there have been several great deluges, some vastly more widespread than others. Sumerian history reaches back to the 26th century BC and before, but the historical record remains obscure until the Early Dynastic III period, ca. the 23rd century BC, when a now deciphered syllabary writing system was developed, which has allowed archaeologists to read contemporary records and inscriptions. Classical Sumer ended with the rise of the Akkadian Empire in the 23rd century. Herein arises the hard question for science: from whence did the ‘Sumerians’ come . . . ?



*Painting by Edward Hicks (1780–1849)
showing the animals boarding Noah's Ark two by two.*

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Extract

The Legend of the Deluge

TABLET XI - including the LEGEND OF THE DELUGE (Ziusudra = Noah)

Gilgamesh said to him / Said to Ziusudra the Faraway:

I look upon you now, Ziusudra, but your appearance is not strange.

You are like myself. I had imagined you as a great warrior. But you lie on your side, reclining at ease.

Tell me, how did you enter the Assembly of the Gods - how find everlasting life?

Ziusudra said to him, said to Gilgamesh:

'O Gilgamesh, I will disclose unto you a hidden thing. Yes, a secret of the gods will I tell unto you:

You know the city Shuruppak, which lies upon the River Euphrates. That city was of great antiquity

And ancient were the gods who still lived within it / In their hearts they resolved / To bring on the Great Flood

[There is no break here, but it is necessary to make some remarks about Abubu, or Great Flood, so see note 1 at the end.]

Present there were An the Great God
Valiant Enlil, his son, Counselor of the Gods,
Their assistant Ninurta, the God of War and Hunting,
Ennugi, their inspector of canals,
And also Ninigiku, which is to say Enki -
For he too was present with them.

And Enki repeats what they say to Ziusudra,
Speaking through the wall of Ziusudra's reed hut:
'Reed hut, reed hut! Wall of the hut, wall of the hut!
Listen o reed hut! Consider, o wall of the hut!

[spoken to Uta-Naphishtim by Enki]
[ref: Wooley, [The Sumerians](#), pg. 123]
Reed-hut, reed-hut, wall, O wall,
O reed-hut, hear, O wall, understand.

**O man of Shuruppak, o you son of Ubara-Tutu,
Tear down your hut of reeds,
Build of them a reed boat / Abandon things
Seek life / Give up possessions / Keep your soul alive!
And into the boat take the seed of all living creatures.
The boat you will build
Will have dimensions carefully measured
Its length and its width shall be equal
And roof it as I have my subterranean watery abyss."
I understood and said to my lord Enki:
"My lord, behold. What have you commanded of me
Shall I honor and carry out
But tell me, what shall I answer
To the city, to the people, to the elders?"
Enki opened his mouth to speak
Said to me, his servant:
*"Thus, O Mortal, shall you speak to them, saying
I have learned that the god Enlil
is ill-disposed toward me*

*No longer can I reside here in the city.
Never again, / No, never.
Can I turn my face to this soil which is Enlil's.
I must go down therefore,
Down to dwell with my lord Enki,
Towards the marshes of the south,
And enter his sweet-watered Deep
Into his very Abyss (2).
But he will shower down upon you
Abundance and plenty.
The choicest of birds, / The rarest of fishes
Oh, what great harvest riches shall this land enjoy!
Yes, He who orders the grainheads in the evening
What a shower of wheat
shall He rain down upon you!" (3)
On the horizon there appeared
The first intimations of dawn.
The land was gathered about me.*

*For above [blue] text, ref. Sitchen's [The 12th Planet](#), page 381, 382.

[Here two lines are missing. When the text resumes, Ziusudra is still speaking to Gilgamesh]

The child brought bitumen,
The strong brought the rest of what was needed
On the fifth day I laid out the plan

The floor space was one iku (4)
Its sides were ten gar high,
Each edge of its square roof measured ten gar (5)

(The ark was therefore an exact cube measuring 120 cubits on each side.
This is hardly the description of a physical sailing ship!)

I delineated its exterior shape
And fashioned it together
Cross-pinned it six times (6)

Thus dividing it into seven (7)
And the ground plan I divided into nine parts (8)
I drove water plugs into it

Saw to the punting holes and laid up what was needful
Into the furnace I poured six [or three] shar measures (9) of bitumen
Followed by three shar measures of asphalt.
The basket-bearers carried three shar measures of oil
Besides one shar measures of oil stowed away the boatman (10)

I slaughtered bullocks for the people
Every day I slew sheep (11)
As though it were river water
I gave to the workmen
Red wine, white wine, must, oil
To feast as if it were New Year's day

I opened the container and laid my hands in unguent
**On the seventh day the boat was completed
.....was very difficult
The edges of the floor above and below
Showed 2/3 of the floor [were above, 1/3 below?] (12)*

Whatever I had I loaded aboard,
Whatever I had of silver I loaded aboard,
Whatever I had of gold I loaded aboard
*Whatever I had of seed of all living creatures
I loaded aboard.*
I caused all my family and kinsfolk to go aboard.
**The beasts of the field, / The wild creatures of the plain,
All the craftsmen - / All these I made to go aboard.*

[ref: Wooley, The Sumerians, pg. 123]

What I had,
I loaded thereon, the whole harvest of life
I caused to embark within the vessel; all my family and relations,
The beasts of the field, the cattle of the field,
The craftsmen, I made them all embark.

*Shamash the Sun had set for me a specific time, saying:
'When He who rains down His misfortune
in the twilight
Does rain down His misfortune like a blight,
Then board your boat without further ado*

And make sure your door is safely pulled to.'
That precise time had indeed arrived:
'When He who rains down His misfortune
in the twilight
Does rain down His misfortune like a blight'.

*For above [blue] text, ref. Sitchen's The 12th Planet, page 382 [& pg. 383-5 for text following].
[This rhymed utterance provides the true message of Enki's disguised message
to the people of Shuruppak given earlier]

I scrutinized all the weather signs;
**How awesome was the weather to behold!
I boarded the boat without further ado
And made sure that the door was safely pulled to.
I committed the navigation of the great house
and its contents
To the boatman Puzur-Amurri (14).
When on the horizon / The first intimations of dawn
A black cloud rose from the horizon (15)
Inside it Adad the storm thundered,
While Shullat and Hanish, the storm-heralds,
rose ahead,
Moving as advance messengers over hill and plain.
**Nergal, the God of the Underworld, tore out the posts.
Ninurta, the God of War and Irrigation, came forth and
burst the dikes.*
The Anunnaki - the Great Gods - raised their torches,
Lighting up the land with their brightness.
Astonishment at Adad the Storm reached*

[ref: Wooley, The Sumerians, pg. 123]

I entered the vessel
And closed the door . . .

When the young dawn gleamed forth
From the foundations of heaven a black cloud arose;
Adad roared in it,
Nabu and the King
march in front . . .

Nergal seizeth the mast,
He goeth, Inurta leadeth the attack . . .

The tumult of Adad ascends

to the very heavens.

He turned to blackness all that had been visible.

He broke the land like a pot.

For a whole day the South Storm blew,

Gathering speed as it blew, drowning the mountains,

Overcoming the people as in battle.

Brother saw not brother.

From heaven no mortal could any longer be seen.

Even the gods were struck by terror at the deluge,

And, fleeing, they ascended

to the celestial band of An (16).

The gods cowered like dogs (17),

Crouching by the outer wall of that celestial band.

Inanna, Goddess of Love and Battle,

cried out like a suffering mortal -

She, the sweet-voiced,

She, the Lady of the Gods,

How did she lament aloud, crying:

'Verily, the Old Age has crumbled into dust!

Because I spoke evil in the Assembly of Gods!

Oh, how could I command havoc

for the destruction of my people

When I myself gave birth to my people?

**For six days and seven nights*

The flood wind blew as the South Storm swept the land.

At sunrise in the seventh day

The South Storm, bringer of the flood, and

Which had fought like an army, abated its attack.

The sea grew quieter, / The storm subsided,

The flood ceased. / I looked at the weather;

It had gone quiet. / All men had returned to clay.

The land had been leveled like a terrace.

**O opened a dove flap / And light fell upon my face.*

I bowed, sat down and wept,

Tears flowing down my cheeks.

I peered in every direction but the sea was everywhere,

In each of the 14 regions

There emerged a mountain peak for that point (18).

The boat came to rest on Mount Nisir (19).

Mount Nisir held the boat fast,

Allowing no shifting position.

One day, a second day, / Mount Nisir held the boat fast,

Allowing no shifting position.

A 3rd day, a 4th day and a 6th day,

Mount Nisir held the boat fast,

Allowing no shifting position.

When the seventh day dawned,

I brought a dove out and set it free.

The dove went forth but then returned.

The dove found no resting-place and turned back (20).

I brought out a swallow and set it free.

The swallow went forth but then returned

The swallow found no resting-place and turned back (21)

I brought out a raven and set it free.

The raven flew forth but saw the waters were sinking,

To the skies.

All that is bright is turned into darkness,

The brother seeth the brother no more,

The folks of the skies can no longer recognize each other.

The gods feared the flood,

They fled, they climbed

Into the heaven of Anu,

The gods crouched like a dog on the wall,

They lay down . . .

Now the spawn of fishes,

the sea is glutted with their bodies!

The Anunnaki - the Great Gods - wept with her,

Their lips were shut tight in distress in the Assembly,
one and all.

[ref: Wooley, The Sumerians, pg. 123]

For six days and nights

Wind and flood marched on, the hurricane subdued the land.

When the seventh day dawned

the hurricane was abated,

the flood, / Which had waged war like an army;

The sea was stilled, the ill wind was calmed

the flood ceased. / I beheld the sea,

its voice was silent / And all mankind was turned into mud!

As high as the roofs reached the swamp! . . .

I beheld the world, the horizon of sea;

Twelve measures away an island emerged;

Unto mount Nisir came the vessel,

Mount Nisir held the vessel

And let it not budge . . .

When the seventh day came

I sent forth a dove, I released it;

It went, the dove, it came back,

As there was no place, it came back.

I sent forth a swallow, I released it;

It went, the swallow, it came back,

As there was no resting place, it came back..

I sent forth a crow, I released it;

It went, the crow, and beheld the subsidence of the waters;

She ate, circled, croaked, *but did not return back.*
 Then I sent forth all the four winds
And offered a sacrifice
 On the peak of the mountain
 I poured out a libation.
 Twice seven were the cult-vessels I set up,
 Heaping upon their pot-stands sweet cane,
 Cedar, myrtle,
**The gods smelled the savor.*
The gods gathered like flies around the sacrifice.

Now when Inanna, the Lady of the Gods, arrived,
 She lifted up the magnificent jewels
 which An the Great god
 Had made according to her desire, and said:
 'O ye gods here present!
**Just as surely as I shall not forget*
 The lapis lazuli around my neck,
**So shall I remember these days, / Never forgetting them.*
 Let the gods come to the offering.
 But let not Enlil come to the offering;
 For he, unreasoning, brought on the deluge
 And delivered my people over to destruction!
 Now when Enlil arrived and saw the boat,
 He waxed wroth, / He was filled with fury
 against the heavenly Igigi gods and said:
**What! - Has any mortal escaped?*
No mortal was to survive the destruction!'
 Ninurta, God of War, opened his mouth to speak,
 said to valiant Enlil:
**Who besides the god Enki could devise such a plan?*
The god Enki alone understands every matter.'
 Enki opened his mouth to speak,
 saying to valiant Enlil:
 'O wisest of gods, O great warrior hero,
 How could you, taking no counsel,
 Bring on the deluge?
 He who has sinned, on him lay his sin.
 He who has transgressed, on him lay his transgression
 But oh be merciful, lest all be destroyed.
 Be long suffering, that man may not perish.
 Rather than your bringing on the deluge,
 Oh, that a lion had come to diminish mankind!
 Rather than you bringing on the deluge,
 Oh, that a famine had arisen
 To lay mankind low.
 Rather than you bringing in the deluge
 Oh, that Erra, god of Pestilence, had come
 To strike mankind down.
 What is more, it was not I
**Not I who revealed the Secret of the Great Gods,*
I allowed Ziusudra, he who abounds in wisdom
To see a dream / It was thus that he perceived
The secret of the Great Gods
Now then take counsel concerning him.'
Then Enlil went up into the ship.
He grasped my hand, / He caused me to go aboard,
He caused my wife to go aboard,

It eats, it splashes about, it caws, it comes not back.

[so Uta-Napishtim leaves his ship and
 on the top of a mountain makes sacrifice to propitiate the gods,
 and the gods, hungry because their food had failed them
 since the drowning of the temples,]

. . . scented the sweet savour,
 And like flies the gods gathered above the sacrifice;
 [and decided never again to risk the destruction of man.]

He made her to kneel beside me
He stood there between us,
He touched our foreheads and blessed us;
"Until now, Ziusudra has been a more mortal
But from now shall Ziusudra and his wife
Be like unto us gods. / Ziusudra shall reside far away -
At the confluence of the celestial rivers -
There shall he dwell!"
 And so they took me and made me reside far away,
 At the confluence of the celestial rivers.
 But now, o Gilgamesh, as for you,
 Who will assemble the gods for you
 That you may find the Life that you seek?
 Come, do not lie down, sleep not
 For six days and seven nights'. (22)
 As he sits on his haunches,
 Sleep breathes upon him like a light rain in a mist (23).
 Ziusudra says to her, says to his wife:
 'Behold, the strong one who seeks Life-Everlasting!
 Sleep breathes upon him like rain in a mist.'
 His wife says to him, to Ziusudra the Faraway:
 'Oh, touch him / Let the man awake,
 That he may return in peace
 Along the route by which he came.
 That he may return to his land
 By the portal through which he came. ;
 Ziusudra says to her, says to his wife:
 'Mankind being wicked, he will seek to deceive you.
 Bake some little cakes of bread
 And put them by his head.
 She put these by his head
 And she marked on the wall the days he slept.
 His first cake of bread dried out,
 His second was gone bad,
 His third was moist and soggy,
 His fourth turned white,
 His fifth had a moldy look, / His 6th was still fresh
 His 7th - just as he was touched, he awoke.
 Gilgamesh says to Ziusudra, the Faraway:
 'Hardly did sleep steal over me,
 when suddenly you touched me and woke me!'
 Ziusudra says to him / Says to Gilgamesh:
 'Not so, Gilgamesh! Count your cakes of bread,
 They will show you how many days you have slept.
 The first cake is dried out, / The second is gone bad,
 The third is moist and soggy,
 The crust of the fourth has turned white,

The fifth has a moldy look,
 The sixth is still fresh.
 The seventh, the moment it was baked -
 at this instant you did awaken.'
 Gilgamesh says to him
 Says to Ziusudra the Faraway:
 'Ah, but what shall I do, Ziusudra?
 Where shall I go?
 Now that the Snatcher has laid hold of my entrails?
 Death lurks in my bedchamber,
 death follows my footsteps already!
 Ziusudra says to him,
 Says to Urshanabi the Boatman
 'Urshanabi, may the landing-place not welcome you.
 May the place of crossing reject you!
 He who approaches its surrounding rim
 Deny him its rim!' (25)
 The man before whose face you have walked
 Whose body is covered in long hair
 The grace of whose form skins have distorted
 Let him wash his long hair clean as snow in water -
 Let him throw off his skins,
 Let the sea carry them away,
 So that the fairness of his body may be seen
 Let him place a new band around his head
 Let him cover his nakedness with a fresh garment
 Until he will accomplish his journey
 Let not his garment have a moldy look -
 Let it be quite new.'
 Urshanabi took him and brought him
 to the place of cleansing
 He washed his long hair
 He threw off his skins
 That the sea might carry them away,
 That the fairness of his body might be seen
 He placed a new band around his head
 He covered his nakedness with a fresh garment,
 Until he should arrive in his city,
 Until he should accomplish his journey.
 The garment did not have a moldy look
 But was quite new.
 Gilgamesh and Urshanabi boarded the ship.
 They launched the ship on the waves
 and they glided forth,
 His wife says to him
 Says to Ziusudra the Faraway:
 'Gilgamesh has come hither,
 He has wearied himself, / He has exerted himself.
 What gift will you make to him (26)
 That he may return to his land?'
 That he, Gilgamesh, raised up his pole,
 And brought the ship near to the shore (27).
 Ziusudra says to him / Says to Gilgamesh:
 'Gilgamesh, you have come hither,
 You have wearied yourself,
 You have wearied yourself.
 What gift shall I make to you
 That you may return to your land?
 Gilgamesh, I will disclose unto you
 A hidden thing.

Yes, a secret of the gods will I tell unto you:
 There is a plant, / Its thorn is like the buckthorn,
 Its thorns will prick your hands
 As does the rose
 If that plant shall come to your hands
 You will find new life'.
 No sooner had Gilgamesh heard this
 Than he opened the water-pipe (28)
 He tied heavy stones on his feet
 in the manner of the pearl divers
 They pulled him down into the deep
 There he saw the plant.
 He took the plant, though it pricked his hands.
 He cut the heavy stones from his feet
 The sea cast him up upon its shore
 Gilgamesh says to him
 Says to Urshanabi the Boatman:
 'Urshanabi, this is the plant that is different
 from all others.
 By its means a man can lay hold of the breath of life.
 I shall take it to Uruk of the ramparts.
 I shall cause.... / To eat the plant....
 It shall be called Man Becomes Young in Old Age.
 I myself shall eat it,
 that I may return to the state of my youth.'
 There I myself shall eat the plant
 that I may return to the state of my youth.'
 After 20 intervals they broke off a morsel.
 After 30 more rested for the night.
 Gilgamesh saw a well whose water was cool
 He descended into it to bathe in the water
 A serpent smelled the fragrance of the plant
 It darted up from the well and seized the plant:
 Sloughing its skin in rejuvenation as it returned.
 Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept.
 His tears flowed down his cheeks.
 He took the hand of Urshanabi, the Boatman:
 'For whom have my hands labored, Urshanabi?
 For whom has my heart's blood been spent?
 I have not obtained any advantage for myself.
 I have only obtained an advantage
 for the earth-lion (29)'.
 And now the tide will bear it
 twenty-double hours away!
 When I opened the water-pipe
 And... the gear
 I noted the sign which was set for me
 As a warning: I shall withdraw,
 And leave the ship on the shore.'
 After twenty intervals / They broke a morsel
 And thirty more / Rested for the night (30)
 When they arrived in Uruk of the ramparts
 Gilgamesh says to him
 Says to Urshanabi the Boatman:
 'Go up, Urshanabi, walk on the ramparts of Uruk (31)
 See the foundation terrace
 Touch, then, the masonry -
 Is not this of burnt brick
 And good? I say
 The seven sages laid its foundation

One third is city. One third is orchards.
One third is margin land.
There is the precinct of the temple of Inanna/Ishtar

These three parts / And the precinct
Comprise Uruk

[Written down according to its original and collated Palace of Ashurbanipal,
King of the World, King of Assyria.]

NOTES TO TABLET XI

1. The biblical Great Flood is a tradition which is known to be derived directly from the Sumerian-Babylonian one. What, then, are the origins of the latter? The Babylonian word for the Great Flood, Abubu, is yet another key word to be borrowed from the Egyptians. The word evidently comes from the Egyptian Agb-hu-bua, which literally means the celestial Deluge - Inundation - Great, or in other words, the celestial Great Flood. With both linguistic validity and identity of meaning, the origin of this term from the Egyptian and identity of meaning, the origin of this term from the Egyptian astro-religion can hardly be doubted. As to the actual symbolic significance of the Great Flood, that is far too complex a matter to be discussed briefly here. But it was never intended to be taken literally as an actual physical deluge on the earth. That is a later misunderstanding which arose amongst the uninitiated.

Not only is the word for the Great Flood derived from the Egyptian, but so is the Hebrew word used for the ark in the Bible. The ark in the Book of Genesis is called teba, an unusual word which only occurs elsewhere at Exodus 2:3-5, as a description of the Egyptian reed container in which the baby Moses was placed. This word comes from the Egyptian word teba meaning box, chest or coffer. We shall see in a moment that the Babylonian ark was not a ship at all but a perfect cube, and that box or chest was indeed a better descriptive term. It is misleading for English translations of the Bible to imply that the ark was a ship, since the Hebrew word used for it does not mean ship. In connection with teba, it should be noted that in Egyptian the related verb teben means to cycle, to revolve in a circle and teb means a cycle of time. Thus we see something of the celestial connections of the ark.

2. For an explanation of Enki's hideaway, see the introduction, page xxii.

3. This is a conscious deception on Enki's part. He wishes the inhabitants of Shuruppak to believe this mundane meaning of the words, neglecting the real meaning, which by a play on words states the truth: 'What a rain of misfortune shall He rain down upon you!' Possibly because gods are not supposed to lie, Enki wishes to have the truth spoken but in a disguised manner which is intended to be misunderstood. Since none of the inhabitants of Shuruppak are meant to survive, the deception hardly seems worth the trouble. (Doubtless Enki had an eye to what posterity would have to say.) Throughout the ancient world puns and plays on words were used to explain why the utterances of gods made through oracles appeared to be inaccurate prophecies. This was a common practice, for instance, in Greece, where many responses of the Oracle of Delphi took this deceptive form - or at least were said afterwards to have done so.

4. An iku or one field, was a square measure of one hundred musar, or about 3,600 square meters, which is approximately one modern acre. However, iku was also the name of the constellation now called Pegasus, or more particularly of what is now called the Square of Pegasus. Among the Babylonians, the Square of Pegasus was represented by a field in the sky defined by four stars which do indeed make nearly a square shape in the heavens. Iku was meant to be the home of the God Enki (his other home was Eridu, identified with the star Canopus in Argo, the stellar constellation associated in Greek and Egyptian tradition with the ark, as well as the Greek ship Argo, whose name has the same derivation of the word ark (see Tablet VII, note 1).

Some extremely interesting information about Iku is given by Werner Papke in his book 'Die Sterne von Babylon'. He shows that the heliacal rising of Sirius, which was New Year's Day of the most fundamentally important calendar to the Egyptians and the Babylonians, if taken as day one, means that the heliacal rising of the constellation Iku took place 240 days or 2/3 of a year. This, I deduce, may be another reason why Ziusudra's boatman, Urshani, is called the Priest of Two-Thirds, and why Enki and Gilgamesh are both two-thirds (see also Tablet IX, note 11).

5. Ten gar is equal to 120 cubits and a cubit is thought to have been roughly half a meter in modern measurements. That means that the measurements of this original ark were a mere sixty meters on each side, which is approximately the size of a large house. Clearly there was no room inside such a small structure for the biblical two of every kind. It is mysterious what these measurements are intended to convey to us. Was there any actual cubical structure of these dimensions built somewhere? We do not know. It would be interesting to compare these measurements with the dimensions of temples excavated by archeologists. Sacred buildings may have attempted to emulate or reproduce these dimensions, and archeologists may well not have thought to look for such correspondences.

6. Geometrically, this indicates the construction of a cube from a central joint with a strut affixed to the centre of each of the six faces.

7. The six faces plus the centre? Other translators have suggested six decks inside, with the top being the seventh surface.
8. Retaining the motif of 'thirds': by dividing the square into thirds both vertically and horizontally, one gets nine equal nine squares within the original square. The resulting ennead may have had some arcane significance in sacred geometry akin to the tetractys (a triangular pattern of ten dots believed to represent the perfect number) of the later Greek Pythagoreans. Doubtless the three horizontal strips would also be meant to represent the three sky bands (see Tablet VII, note 1), or at least to echo them.
9. Shar means 3,600 and the unit of volume is left unspecified, but assuming it was the sutu (just over two modern gallons), one shar was thus equal to approximately 8,000 modern gallons.
10. This line and the six preceding ones reflect the pretense of the poet/compiler of the Epic that he is describing an actual boat. To return to an astro-religious level, note how boatman Urshanabi stows away two-thirds of the three shar measures of oil - a correspondence which was doubtless thought appropriate.
11. Divination by the entrails of sheep on a daily basis would be customary for such an enterprise as this among the Babylonians: the meat would afterwards be consumed. Knowledge of this would betaken for granted amongst all the poet/compiler's contemporaries, obviating any need for comment or explanation.
12. This passage is fragmentary. Two-thirds is preserved and is known not to refer to the entire ship because of a masculine pronominal suffix, whereas the noun for the boat is feminine. It must therefore refer to the floor. The meaning may be that the lower of the three horizontal strips of the floor corresponded to the southern sky band of Enki - below the equator.
13. Cyrus Gordon (see Bibliography) Wryle observes that Ziusudra disregards Enki's advice to leave all his possessions behind.
14. Amurru, of which Amurri is a genitive in the construct state, was a figure in Babylonian mythology whose name was identified with the West, the West Wind, the Gate of the West Wind, as well as West Star, referring to the star Mirfak in the constellation Perseus (known as Amurru by the Babylonians). The star is in the Milky Way and is pointed to directly by a diagonal drawn across Iku from the star Markab to the star Alpheratz. In addition, an amazing survival of specific material from the Epic is found in Greek mythology attached to the figure of Perseus:
 Perseus and his mother were thrown into the sea in a wooden chest in the shape of a cube. Thus both the Babylonian and the Greek figures, Amurru and Perseus were identified with the same constellation, sailed in cubical arks. Like Amurru, Perseus had associations with the West, for he visited the place of the gorgons, beyond the Western ocean. Furthermore, Perseus like Amurru had a direct connection with Pegasus/Iku. Pegasus in Greek myth though a son of the Ocean, also sprang from the blood of Medusa after Perseus slew her. Pegasus thus came into being because of an action by Perseus. Finally, like the Babylonian ark whose floor was associated with Pegasus/Iku (see note 4 above), Pegasus in Greek myth also came to rest on a mountain peak, Mount Helicon.
15. A black cloud is here described as having a heliacal rising in the manner of a star.
16. An's sky band was the equatorial band which was above that of Enki. This line gives support to the earlier suggestion that one-third of the ark's floor was below, correlated with Enki's sky band (see note 12 above), for here we have clear evidence that two sky bands were above the deluge and only one sky band, that of Enki in the south, was below it. It is also important that the storm which created this deluge is described as the South Storm, namely one in the band of Enki, the southern sky below the equator.
17. See Tablet VII, note 5.
18. These are the 14 mountain peaks associated with the adjoining 14 major oracle centres above the geodetic baseline known to the Egyptians, Minoans and Babylonians. The peaks were geodetic survey-markers and the purpose of these geodetic points was for survey purposes to allow no shifting of position. The Greek historian Herodotus records that the oracle centre of Dodona was founded by doves flying from Egyptian Thebes. Mount Tomaos was the geodetic marker for Dodona and the Greek ark of Deucalion (the Greek Noah) was said to have landed on this peak. A rival tradition maintained that Deucalion's ark landed on Mount Parnasos, the geodetic marker for the oracle of Delphi. The biblical tradition states that Noah's ark landed on Mount Ararat, which was the geodetic marker for the ancient oracle centre of Metsamor.
 (Further investigation reveals that Mount Tomaros and Mount Ararat are on precisely the same line of latitude, indicating that the Greek and Hebrew arks in ostensibly separate traditions landed on exactly the same latitude as each other, which can hardly be a coincidence.) Precisely one degree of latitude south of the oracle of Dodona and Metsamor is the oracle of Delphi, and of Delos, once of major oracular importance but defunct as an oracle by about the 7th BCE. The mountain-marker for Delos was Mount Cynthus. Mountain peaks were used for signaling and surveying purposes for thousands of years. Indeed, the use of mountain peaks for the lighting of bonfires as a signaling system is referred to by the Greek playwright Aeschylus as occurring at the time of Homer. J.H. Quincey has reconstructed this system, complete with a map in an article entitled 'The Beacon sites in the Agamemnon'.

19. A variant name for Mount Nisur was Mount Nimush. Speiser identifies it with the modern mountain Pir Omar Gudrun. The precise identity of Mount Nisir requires further research, as does the entire geography of the Epic. However, Mount Nisir seems to have been a mountain in the Zagros range east of Babylon itself and like Babylon, precisely seven degrees of latitude south of Mount Ararat.

20. There is a contradiction here, since the 14 mountain peaks had already emerged.

21. Swallows were used in the ancient world as messenger birds, in the same way as were doves - or carrier-pigeons, as we call these specialized birds today. There is much evidence to suggest that messenger birds were used by the priests as well as by the long-distance navigators of antiquity. Pliny refers to the use of shore-sighting birds by navigators from Ceylon in Roman times. But far earlier nautical uses of shore sighting doves are recounted in his book Prehistoric Crete by R. W. Hutchinson, who maintains that Sumerian sea captains must have been using them by the third millennium BCE. Jason used them in his Argo voyage as well.

In ancient times there was a secret carrier-pigeon and carrier-swallow network connecting the oracle centres which enabled the priests to be in instant touch by bird telegraphy so that they could fake oracular prophecies by getting information in advance. The returning of the dove and of the swallow are esoteric references to this network, intended to be unintelligible to the uninitiated.

Similarly, an esoteric Egyptian pun is preserved in the use of the expression turned back as applied to Ziusudra's dove and swallow. *Un* in Egyptian means dovecote, but it also means to turn back. This pun thus referred to the doves from the *un* performing an *un*. Once again we see the trace of a sacred Egyptian pun lingering on in a language where it had ceased any longer to be a pun or have a double meaning.

22. See Introduction.

23. Other translators give *kima imbari* the violent connotation of 'like a whirlwind' or 'rain storm', whereas *imbaru* in fact conveys the image of mist or fog.

24. Once again we have a tradition deriving from the Egyptians. The reference is to the non-phonetic Egyptian hieroglyph for 'time', which was a little round baked cake of bread. The bread cakes are thus visual/word puns expressing the passage of time.

25. The word *ahu*, which appears in the original text, should not be translated as 'shore'. Speiser and Heidel force that meaning on the word, whereas it really means rim, edge, surrounding region. Not many lines later, and again after that, the correct word for shore, *kibru*, occurs and recurs (see note 27 below), demonstrating by its proximity and constant use that *ahu* cannot have been intended in the sense of shore. Once more, the rim of the cosmic wheel by which Gilgamesh traveled to Ziusudra in the first place is referred to here (see also Tablet IX, note 1).

26. It was customary to make a gift to a departing guest.

27. Because an actual shore is referred to here, the appropriate word, *kibru*, is used, as it is again a few lines further on. Previous translators have wrongly assumed that the wheel rim mentioned earlier must be this shore.

28. This strange word, *ratu*, is mentioned also in the Babylonian creation poem as a cosmic connection - a 'pipe' in the figurative sense - between the city of Eridu and the temple of Esagila, which corresponded respectively with the god Enki's two abodes, the star Canopus in Argo and the Iku or Pegasus Square. Endowing the word with the sense of channel rather than pipe, it may well be the cosmic river Eridanus, as the constellation is known today, may be the transit channel across the sky which is intended here.

29. The 'earth-lion' is believed to refer to the serpent. Some esoteric meaning is intended, but it is not clear.

30. These two recent stages of 50 intervals - literally 'double hours' - each, over two days altogether, represent two-thirds of the journey made in Tablet IV to the Cedar Forest. Once again the motif of two-thirds recur (See Tablet IV, note 3, and Tablet IX, note 13).

31. See Tablet IX, note 33.