

Erra & Ishtum, Kabti-ilani-Marduk

Foster's (B.) From Distant Days: myths, tales and poetry from Ancient Mesopotamia, CDL Press, 1995

Fundstelle

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TABLET I

Narrator invokes Marduk, chief deity of Babylon, and Ishum, vanguard and companion of Erra. Erra is restless and breaks into a soliloquy. He is anxious to fight and campaign, but hesitates through natural inertia. Speaking of himself in the third person, Erra says that what he needs to stir him to action is Ishum's encouragement

O king of all inhabited lands, creator of the world,

O Hendursagga (1), first born of Enlil []

Holder of the sublime scepter (2), herdsman of the black-headed folk, shepherd of mankind,

O Ishum, zealous slaughterer (3), whose hands are suited to brandish fierce weapons,

And to make his sharp spear flash, Erra, warrior of the gods, was restless in his dwelling,

His heart urged him to do battle!

Says he to his weapons.

"Smear yourselves with deadly venom!"

To the Seven, warriors unrivalled,

"Let your weapons be girded!"

He even says to you:

"You are the torch, they will see your light (4)

"You are the vanguard, the gods will []

"You are the stanchion, [zealous] slaughterer!

"(So) up, Erra, from laying waste the land

"How cheerful your mood will be and joyful your heart!

"Erra's limbs are sluggish, like those of a mortal lacking sleep,

"He says to himself, Shall I get up or go to sleep?i

"He says to his weapons, Stay in the corners!i

"To the Seven, warriors unrivalled, Go back to your dwellings!i

"Until you rouse him, he will sleep in his bedrooms,

"He will dally with Mami, his mate".

(With a second invocation, now of Ishum, the narrator introduces the terrible Seven, who stand ready to massacre the "black-headed folk" or Mesopotamians)

O Engidudu, who patrols at night, ever guiding the noble,

Who ever guides young men and women in safety, making light as day,

The Seven, warriors unrivalled, their divine nature is different,

Their origins are strange, they are terrifying,

Whoever sees them is numbed with fear.

Their breath of life is death,

People are too frightened to approach it!

Yet Ishum is the door, bolted before them.

When Anu, the king of the gods, sowed his seed in the earth,

She bore him seven gods, he called them the Seven.

They stood before him, that he ordain their destinies,

He summoned the first to give his instructions,

"Wherever you go and spread terror, have no equal."

He said to the second, "Burn like fire, scorch like flame".

He commanded the third, "Look like a lion, let him who sees you be paralysed with fear".

He said to the fourth, "Let a mountain collapse when you present your fierce arms".

He said to the fifth, "Blast like the wind, scan the circumference of the earth".

He said to the sixth, "Go out everywhere (like the deluge) and spare no one".

The seventh he charged with viperous venom, "Slay whatever lives".

After Anu had ordained destinies for all of the Seven,

He gave those very ones to Erra, warrior of the gods, saying:

"Let them go beside you, when the clamor of human habitations becomes noisome to you,

"And you resolve to wreak destruction,

"To massacre the black-headed folk and fell the livestock,

"Let these be your fierce weaponry, let them go beside you".

The Seven offer the encouragement that Erra needs. . In a rousing call to arms, they extol the heroic excitement of the campaign, the honor, prestige and gratification it brings. The Seven claim vaguely that they are not respected enough, that others are growing more important than they. They bring up the old charge that men make too much noise for the gods to sleep, although this was not the cause Erra had given for his lown lack of sleep. The Seven claim further that there are too many wild animals on the loose. Their final claim no doubt the most important one, is that they are bored and out of training.

These are the ones who are in a fury, holding their weapons aloft,

They are saying to Erra, "Up, do your duty!

"Why have you been sitting in the city like a feeble old man,

"Why sitting at home like a helpless child?

"Shall we eat woman food, like non-combatants?

Have we turned timorous and trembling, as if we can't fight?

"Going to the field for the young and vigorous is like to a very feast,

"But the noble who stays in the city can never eat enough.

"His people will hold him in low esteem, he will command no respect,

"How could he threaten a campaigner?

"However well developed is the strength of the city dweller,

"How could he possibly best a campaigner?

"However toothsome city bread, it holds nothing to the campfire loaf,

"However sweet fine beer, it holds nothing to water from a skin,

"The terraced palace holds nothing to the wayside sleeping spot!

"Be off to the field, warrior Erra, make your weapons clatter,
"Make loud your battle cry that all around they quake,
"Let the Igigi-gods hear and extol your name,
"Let the Anunna-gods hear and flinch at the mention of your,
"Let all the gods hear and bend for your yoke,
"Let sovereigns hear and fall prostrate before you,
"Let countries hear and bring you their tribute,
"Let the lowly hear and perish of their own accord,
"Let the mighty hear and his strength diminish,
"Let lofty mountains hear and their peaks crumble,
"Let the surging sea hear and convulse, wiping out her increase!
"Let the stalk be yanked from the tough thicket,
"Let reeds of the impenetrable morass be shorn off,
"Let men turn cowards and their clamor subside,
"Let beasts tremble and return to clay,
"Let the gods your ancestors see and praise your valor!
"Warrior Erra, why do you neglect the field for the city?
"The very beasts and creatures hold us in contempt!
"O warrior Erra, we will tell you, thought that we say be offensive to you!
"Ere the whole land outgrows us,
"You must surely hear our words!
"Do a kindly deed for the gods of hell, who delight in deadly stillness,
"The Anunna-gods cannot fall asleep for the clamor of humankind,
Beasts are overrunning the meadows, life of the land,
"The farmer sobs bitterly for his field,
"Lion and wolf are felling the livestock,
"The shepherd, who cannot sleep day and night for the sake of his flocks, is calling upon you,
"We too, who know the mountain passes, have forgotten how to go,
"Cobwebs are spun over our field gear,
"Our fine bow resists and is too strong for us,
"The tip of our sharp arrow is bent out of true,
"Our blade is corroded for want of a slaughter!"
The warrior Erra heard them,
What the Seven said pleased him like finest oil.
He made ready to speak and said to Ishum:
"Why, having heard, did you sit by silent?
"Lead the way, let me begin my campaign!
"[] the Seven, warriors without rival,
Make my fierce weapons (the Seven) march by my side,
But you be the vanguard and rear guard".

When Ishum heard what he said, he felt pity and said to the warrior Erra:

“O Lord Erra, why have you plotted evil against the gods?

“To lay waste the lands and decimate the people”.

Erra made ready to speak and said to Ishum, his vanguard:

“Keep quiet, Ishum, listen to what I say, as concerns the people of the inhabited world,
whom you would spare.

“O vanguard of the gods, wise Ishum, whose counsel is always for the best,

“I am the wild bull in heaven, I am the lion on earth,

“I am king in the land, I am the fiercest among the gods,

“I am warrior among the Igigi-gods, mighty one among the Anunna-gods!

“I am the smitter of wild beasts, battering ram against the mountain,

“I am the blaze in the reed thicket, the broad blade against the rushes,

“I am banner for the march, I blast like the wind, I thunder like the storm,

“Like the sun, I scan the circumference of the world,

“I am the wild ram striding forth in the steppe,

“I invade the range and take up my dwelling in the fold,

“All the gods are afraid of a fight, so the black-headed folk are contemptuous!

“As for me, since they did not fear my name, and I have disregarded Marduk’s command,
so he may act according to his wishes

“I will make Marduk angry, stir him from his dwelling, and lay waste the people!”

The warrior Erra set out for Babylon, city of the king of the gods.

He entered Esagila, palace of heaven and earth and stood before him.

He made ready to speak, saying to the king of the gods:

“Why has your precious image, symbol of your lordship, lost its brilliance?

“Your lordly diadem, which made the inner sanctum shine like the outside tower, why is it dimmed?”

The king of the gods made ready to speak, saying to Erra, these words,

“O warrior Erra, concerning that deed you said you would do,

“Once, long ago indeed I grew angry, indeed I left my dwelling and caused the deluge!

“When I left my dwelling, the regulation of heaven and earth disintegrated:

“The shaking of heaven meant: the positions of the heavenly bodies changed, nor did I restore them,

“The quaking of netherworld meant: the yield of the furrow diminished, being thereafter difficult to exploit.

“The regulations of heaven and earth disintegrating meant: underground water diminished, high water receded. When I looked again, it was struggle to get enough.

“Productivity of living offspring declined, nor did I renew it,

“Such that were I a plowman, I could hold all seed in my hand.

“I built another house and settled therein (5)

“As to my precious image, which had been struck by the deluge that its appearance was sullied,

“I commanded fire to make my features shine and cleanse my apparel.

“When it had shined my precious image and completed the task,

“I donned my lordly diadem and returned.

"Haughty were my features, terrifying my glare!

"The survivors of the deluge saw what was done,

"Shall I raise my weapon and destroy the rest?

"I sent those craftsmen down to the depths, I ordered them not to come up,

"I removed the wood and gemstone and showed no one where,

"Now then, warrior Erra, as concerns that deed you said you would do,

"Where is the wood, flesh of the gods, suitable for the lord of the universe,

"The sacred tree, splendid stripling, perfect for lordship,

"Whose roots thrust down an hundred leagues through the waters of the vast ocean to the depths of hell,

"Whose crown brushed Anu's heaven on high?

"Where is the clear gemstone that I reserved for []?

"Where is Ninildum, great carpenter of my supreme divinity,

"Wielder of the glittering hatchet, who knows that tool,

"Who makes it shine like the day and puts it in subjection at my feet?

"Where is Kunig-banda, fashioner of god and man, whose hands are sacred?

"Where is Ninagal, wielder of the upper and lower millstone

"Who grinds up hard copper like hide and who forges tools?

"Where are the choice stones, created by the vast sea, to ornament my diadem?

"Where are the seven sages of the depths, those sacred fish, who, like Ea their lord, are perfect in sublime wisdom, the ones who cleansed my person?

The warrior Erra heard him..... []

He made ready to speak, saying to noble Marduk,

"[craftsmen],

"[tree],

"Clear gemstone [from] its place will I bring up."

When Marduk heard this, he made ready to speak, saying to the warrior Erra:

"(When) I rise from my dwelling, the regulation of heaven and earth will disintegrate,

"The waters will rise and sweep over the land,

"Bright day will turn to darkness, whirlwind will rise and the stars of heaven will be...

"Ill winds will blow and the eyesight of living creatures will be darkened,

"Demons will rise up and seize [],

"They will the unarmed one who confronts them!

"The gods of hell will rise up and smite down living creatures,

"Who will keep them at bay till I gird on my weaponry once more?

When Erra heard this, he made himself ready to speak, saying to noble Marduk:

"O noble Marduk, while you enter the house, fire cleanses your apparel and you return to your palace,

"For that time I will govern and keep strong the regulation of heaven and earth,

"I will go up to heaven and issue instructions to the Igigi gods,

"I will go down to the depths and keep the Anunna gods in order.

"I will despatch the wild demons to the netherworld,

"I will brandish my fierce weaponry against them,
"I will truss the wings of the ill wind like a bird's.
"At that house you shall enter, O noble Marduk,
"I will station Anu and Enlil to the right and left, like bulls."
Noble Marduk heard him, the words which Erra spoke pleased him.

TABLET II

He arose from his dwelling, an inaccessible place,
He set out for the dwelling of the Anunna-gods.
He entered that house and stood before them.
Shamash looked upon him and let his protective radiance fall...
Sin looked everywhere, and did not leave the Netherworld,
Ill winds rose and the bright daylight was turned to gloom,
The clamor of the peoples throughout the land was stilled,
The Igigi gods were terrified and went up to heaven,
The Anunna gods were frightened and went down to the pit of hell,
[] the entire circumference []
[] in the dust
[] let us see".
[] its doors.
[] like the stars of heaven.

Gap

The gods convene to discuss the situation. Ea, intent upon restoring Marduk to his place, reasons that, even though the original sublime craftsmen cannot return, Marduk authorized reproduction of them to be made that are endowed with wondrous powers by Ea at Marduk's command. The repairs are proceeding well. Erra, while standing guard at the hour where the work is being done lest harm approach, is taking the opportunity to usurp Marduk's power by keeping everyone away from him. So vainglorious is Erra's shouting that Ea resolves to see him humbled.

"The diadem []
"His heart []
"The governor's []
"The awe-inspiring radiance of his divine splendor [] his days [],
"[] like rain,
"Let Ea in the depths [] his springs,
"Let Shamash see [] and let the people []
"Let Sin behold, and at his sign, let him [] to the land.
"Concerning that work, Ea [] is expert".
"The warrior Erra became very angry,
"Why, because of foam on the waters, the of mankind,

"Which I myself created to bring offerings to the Anunna gods,

"Did noble Marduk give up, not at the appointed time?

"He plotted to lay waste to the lands and destroy their people!"

Ea the king considered and said these words,

"Even now that noble Marduk has arisen from his dwelling, he did not
command those craftsmen to come up.

"How can images of them, which I made among mankind,

"Approach his sublime divinity, where no god has access?

"He himself gave those same human craftsmen great discretion and authority,

"He gave them wisdom and perfect dexterity,

"They have made his precious image radiant, even finer than before,

"Warrior Erra has stationed himself before him, night and day without ceasing,

"Besetting the house for making radiant the precious image for the sovereignty of the king and saying,

'Don't come near the work!

'[He who draws] near it –

I will cut short his life and prolong his death agony.'

"[] let him hasten at the work,

"[] has no equal.

"[] Erra was speaking like a mortal,

"[] was trying to rival the noble one,

"[] may he be humbled."

The images of the craftsmen made his precious image radiant,

[]

They set the.... at his door,

[] king Shamash girds it on,

[] he reoccupied his dwelling,

[] brilliance was reestablished,

[All the gods....] were gathered,

Erra [noble] Marduk,

"Noble Marduk,[]

"Godlike, you []

"Small to great []

[] Erra....

[] ... his uproar was terrifying,

"[] ... the image,

"[] of your lordship are raised up and established".

The king of the gods made ready to speak and said,

"[] and went up to heaven."

[] he commanded,"Return to your dwellings!"

[] ... his sign,

“[] upon your face,

“[] their peoples.

“[] you did not turn your back.”

He heard him, ... said to the king of the gods,

“The word of Marduk [] of the day”.

He said to him []

“Come now, []

“To destroy the lands [why did you plot?]?”

Erra heard him []

...

He entered [].

Anu heard in heaven [],

He bowed his lofty head [],

Antu, mother of the gods, was aghast [],

She entered her chamber,

Enlil's []

Gap

[] father of the gods [][] Enlil []Among the beasts, all of them []Erra among all the gods []Among the stars of heaven the Fox Star []Was shining bright and its radiance [] for him,The stars of all the gods were dazzling [],Because they were angry with each other, and noble Marduk [] put [],“The star of Erra is shining bright and its radiant.... of warfare.“His awe-inspiring brilliance will..... and all people will perish.“The dazzling stars of heaven in his time are dimmed.“.... the ant, does it not rise []?“Among the beasts, the image of their star is the fox,“Endowed with strength, a raging lion [],“Enlil is the father of [], he has []”.

Gap

Ininna replied in the assembly of the gods [],[] her words to Anu and Dagan [],“Keep quiet, all of you, go into your changers,“Cover your lips, do not smell the incense,“Do not debate noble Marduk's word, do not plead,“Until the days are drawn to a close, the appointed time passed,“The word Marduk speaks is like a mountain where.... he does not change it nor []”,

Gap

Ishtar went, they entered the

She pled with Erra, but he would not agree,

Ishum made ready to speak, saying these words to Ishtar,

“I have that of heaven over what is not of heaven,

"Erra is angry and will heed no one,

"Let him come to rest in the mountains and I the seed of the people which you spoke about to us []

"The sublime son of Enlil will not go on campaign without Ishum the vanguard before him".

(Erra is furious. All that he has one is to perform his guard duty and now has been sent home, his services no longer required, without a campaign. This is because he is the most valliant god, no evil rises to oppose him. This he fails to perceive, but, in his blind rage, he resolves to fight his war anyway, to show Marduk and Ea that he is not to be taken so lightly. Erra's self-praise turns into a self-narrative)

He was sitting in the E-meslam, taking up his dwelling,

He thought to himself what habe been done,

His heart being stung, it could give him no answer,

But he asked it what it would have him do.

"Lead the way, let me begin the campaign!

"The days are drawn to a close, the appointed time has passed,

"I give the command and despoil the sun of his protective radiance,

"By night I muffle the face of the moon,

"I say to the thunderstorm, 'Hold back your young bulls!'

"'Brush aside the clouds, cut off snow and rain!'

"I will make Marduk and Ea mindful!

"He who waxed great in the days of plenty, they bury him on a day of drought,

"He who came by water, they take him back on a dusty road,

"I say to the king of the gods, 'Take your place in Esagila,

'They must do what you commanded, they must carry out your order.

'The black-headed folk cry out to you, but do not accept their entreaties!'

"I obliterate the land and reckon it for ruins,

"I lay waste cities and turn them into open spaces,

"I wreck mountains and fell their wildlife,

"I convulse the sea nd destroy its increase,

"Ibring the stillness of death upon swamp and thicket, burning like fire,

"I fell humankind, I leave no living creatures,

"Not one do I retain, nor any for seed to [] the land,

I spare no livestock nor any living creatures,

"I dispatch the soldier from one city against another,

"Neither son nor father has a care for the other's well-being,

"Mother plots evil against daughter with a leer,

"I let yokels into the abodes of gods, where harm must not approach,

"I settle the miscreant in the nobleman's dwelling,

"I let outlandish beasts into the shrines,
"I block access to any city where they appear,
"I send down beasts to the highlands,
"Wherever they set foot, they bring the stillness of death to the thoroughfares,
"I cause beasts of the steppe not to stay in the steppe, but to traverse the city street,
"I make omens unfavorable, I turn holy places into foraging grounds,
"I let the demon "Upholder of Evil" into the dwellings of the gods, where no evil should go,
"I devastate the king's palace [] and turn it into a ruin, and rob them of happiness,
"As [] orchards like fire...
"I let evil enter []

TABLET III

Erra's speech continues, as he glories in the horrors of war, anarchy and privation. There follows a gap in the text.

"[] heeds no one,
"What he (?) reasoned []
"Lions []
"[]
"I make [] go towards []
"I confiscate their households and cut short their lives,
"I assassinate the righteous man who intercedes,
"I set the wicked cutthroat in the highest rank.
"I estrange people's hearts so father listens not to son,
"And daughter cavils spitefully to mother.
"I make their utterances evil, they forget their gods,
"They speak gross blasphemy to their goddesses,
"I stir up the robber and so cut off travel absolutely,
"People rifle one another's belongings in the heart of the city.
"Lion and wolf fell the livestock.
"I aggravate [] and she cuts off birth-giving,
"I deprive the nurse of the wail of toddler and infant,
"I banish the work song of harvest home from the fields,
"Shepherd and herdsman forget their field shelters.
"I cut the clothes from the bodies of men, the young man I parade naked through the city street,
"The young man without clothes I send down to hell,
"The ordinary fellow has not so much as a sheep to offer up for his life,
"For the nobleman's divination lambs are few and precious.
"The patient yearns for a bit of roast to offer for his recovery,
"It does him no good, so he gets up and walks till he dies.
"I incapacitate the nobleman's mount like [],

"I cut []

fragmentary lines, then gap

(The deed spoken and done, Ishum is remonstrating that Enlil has forsaken his city. Erra, in a frenzy, cries for more, and, having done enough himself, lets loose the Seven. Ishum, distressed at Erra's overkill, demands the reason for it.)

"The strong []

"Like the blood []

"You homed their weaponry upon the people under special protection, sacred to Anu and Dagan,

"You made their blood course like ditch water in the city streets,

"You opened their arteries and the watercourses bear their blood away,

"Enlil cried, 'Woe!' his heart was hardened,

"He [] from his dwelling,

"An irreversible curse rose to his lips,

"He swore that he would not drink from the watercourses,

"He was revolted by their blood, and could not enter Ekur,"

Erra said these words to Ishum his vanguard,

"The Seven, warriors unrivaled []

"For all of them []

"Which noble []

"O my vanguard []

"Who can speak []

"Who can [] like fire?

"Who can [] before []

"Who can [] like []

"Who []

"Who can [] Erra?

"The face of a ravaging lion []

"In the rage of [] heart []

"Lead the way, let me begin the campaign!

"Muster the Seven, warriors unrivalled,

"Make them fierce weaponry, go at my side,

"And do you be my vanguard and rear guard."

When Ishum heard this speech of his,

He felt pity and said to himself,

"Alas for my people, victim of Erra's fury [],

"Whom the warrior Nergal overwhelmed like th storm of battle against the demons,

"As if to kill that conquered god, his arms lose no tension,

"As if to snare wicked Anzu, his net is spread!"

Ishum made ready to speak, saying to warrior Erra these words.

"Why have you plotted evil against god and man?

"And why have you remorselessly plotted evil against the black-headed folk?"

Erra made ready to speak, saying to Ishum his vanguard these words,

"You who know the reasoning of the Igigi gods, the counsel of the Anunna gods, would you give guidance to the black-headed folk, and try to make them understand?"

"Why are you, indeed, talking like a know-nothing?"

"You are advising me as if you knew not Marduk's command!"

"The king of the gods has risen from his dwelling!"

"What of all lands has endured?"

"He has removed his lordly diadem:

"King and prince [] forget their duties.

"He has undone his girdle:

"The bond of god and man is undone, impossible to tighten it again.

"Fierce fire made his precious image glow like the day and heightened his protective splendor,

"His right hand grasped the mace, his enormous weapon,

"Noble Marduk's glare is terrifying!"

"As for me, what you said to me [].

"O vanguard of the gods, wise Ishum, whose commands are sound,

"Why, just now, did you ... such speech?"

"Marduk's command is not satisfactory to you?"

Ishum made ready to speak, saying to the warrior Erra:

"O warrior Erra.... []

"Mankind []

"The livestock []

"Swamps and reedbanks []

"Now then, what you said, warrior Erra,

"One stood forth and you [] seven,

"You killed seven and did not let go a single one,

"Take away the livestock []...

"O Erra, when you strike with your weapons,

"Mountains totter, the sea convulses,

"Such a flash of your stanchion, they look east, as if to see the sun rise!

"The palace []

(gap of unknown length)

(Ishum continues: Erra has taken over the universe, even Marduk's sanctuary. How can he now say that no one respects him?)

Ishum made ready to speak, saying to the warrior Erra,

"O warrior Erra, you hold the leadrope of heaven,

"You are master of all the earth, lord to the land!

"You convulse the sea, obliterate mountains,

"You rule over man and herd beasts.

"The primeval sanctuaries are in your hands,

"You control Shuanna and command Esagila,

"You have gathered to yourself all authority, the gods revere you,
"The Igigi gods stand in awe of you, the Anunna gods are in dread of you,
"When you set forth counsel, even Anu heeds you,
"Even Enlil agrees with you, aside from you, is there opposition?
"Except for you, is there battle?
"The armor of strife is yours alone!
"But you have said to yourself, 'They hold me in contempt!'"

TABLET IV

"O warrior Erra, you are the one who feared not noble Marduk's name!
"You have undone Dimkurkurra, the bond of the world (Babylon)
"You changed your divine nature and made yourself a mortal
"You girded on your weaponry and entered Babylon.
"Inside Babylon, you spoke like a rabble-rouser, as if to take over the city,
"The citizenry of Babylon, like reeds in a thicket, had no one in charge so they rallied around you
"He who knew nothing of weapons – his sword was drawn,
"He who knew nothing of archery – his bow was taut,
"He who knew nothing of fighting – set to the fray,
"He who knew nothing of wings – flew off like a bird.
"The cripple could surpass the fleet of foot, the weakling could overpower the strong.
"They give voice to gross insolence against the governor who provides for their holy places,
"With their own hands they blockaded the gate of Babylon their lifeline,
"They have torched the sanctuaries of Babylon like marauders of the land,
"You, the vanguard, took their lead!
"You aimed your shaft at the innermost wall,
"Woe! My heart!' it exclaims,
"You flung the seat of Muhra, its gatekeeper, into the blood of young men and girls,
"The inhabitants of Babylon themselves – they the bird, you the decoy –
"You snared in a net, caught and killed them, warrior Erra!
"You quit the city and have gone out to the outskirts,
"You took a lion's face and have entered the palace.
"When the troops saw you, they girded on their weapons,
"The heart of the governor, avenger of Babylon, turned to fury,
"He issued orders to his army to plunder, as if plundering enemies,
"He incited the commander to atrocities,
"You, my man, for that city I am sending you to,
"Fear no god, respect no man!
"Do young and old alike to death!
"Spare no one, not even the baby sucking milk!
"You shall plunder the accumulated wealth of Babylon!"

"The royal troops drew up and have invaded the city,
"With flashing shafts and outstretched blades,
"You homed their weapons upon those under special protection, sacred to Anu and Dagan,
"You made their blood course like ditchwater in the city streets,
"You opened their arteries and let the watercourses hear their blood away.
"When the great lord Marduk saw that, he cried 'Woe!' and his heart was hardened,
"An irreversible curse rose to his lips,
"He swore that he would not drink from the watercourses,
"He was revolted by their blood and would not enter Esagila,
'Alas for Babylon, whose crown I fashioned luxuriant as a palm's,
but which the wind has scorched,
'Alas for Babylon, that I had laden with seed, like an evergreen, but of
whose delights I could not have what I hoped for!
'Alas for Babylon, that I tended like a thriving orchard, but whose fruit I
could not taste!
'Alas for Babylon, that I suspended like a gemstone on the neck of the
sky!
'Alas for Babylon, that I clasped in my hand like the tablet of destinies,
not handling it over to anyone else!
"And this too has noble Marduk said,
"[] from former days []
'Let one quit the wharf: he shall cross at two cubit's depth of water on
foot,
'Let one go down sixty fathoms in a well, not one man shall keep
himself alive on the water,
'Let them still have to punt the fishing boat 100 leagues out in the open
sea!
"As for Sippar, the primeval city, through which the lord of the world did not allow the deluge to pass, because it was precious to him,
"You destroyed her ramparts against the will of Shamash and threw down her fortifications.
"As for Uruk, the dwelling of Anu and Ishtar, the city of courtesans, harlots, and prostitutes for the cult,
"Whom Ishtar deprived of husbands and reckoned as her own,
"There Sutean nomads, men and women, bandy war whoops!
"They turned out the actors and singers of Eanna,
"Whose manhood Ishtar changed to womanhood to strike awe into the people,
"The wielders of daggers and razors, vintner's shears and flint knives,
"Who take part in abominable acts for the entertainment of Ishtar,
"A haughty, remorseless governor you placed over them,
"He harassed them and interfered with their rites.
"Ishtar was angered, she flew into rage against Uruk,
"She stirred up the enemy and swept clean the country, like granules on the water's face,

"The dweller of Parsa had no respite from lamenting the destroyed Eugal-sanctuary,
"The enemy you roused has no desire to stop.
"Ishtar responded thus,
' You turned the city Der into a wasteland,
' You fractured her populace like reeds,
' You extinguished their clamor like the dying hiss of foam on the
water's face!
'And as for me, you did not spare me, but have me over to the Sutean
nomads"
'For the sake of my city der, I will judge no disputed truth, nor make
any ruling for the land.
'I will give no guidance nor aid in understanding,
'Men forsook truth and took up violence,
'They abandoned justice and were plotting wickedness,
'Against but one country I raised up seven winds,
'He who did not die in battle will die in an epidemic,
'He who did not die in the epidemic, the enemy will plunder him,
'He whom the enemy has not plundered, the bandit will murder him,
'He whom the bandit did not murder, the king's weapon will vanquish
him,
'He whom the king's weapon did not vanquish, the prince will slay him,
'He whom the prince did not slay, a thunderstorm will wash him away,
'He whom the thunderstorm did not wash away, the sun will parch him,
'He who has gone out into the world, the wind will sweep him away,
'He who has gone into his home, a demon will strike him,
'He who has gone up to a high place, will perish of thirst,
'He who has gone down to a low place, will perish in the waters
'You have obliterated high and low place alike.
'The man in charge of the city says to his mother,
" If only I had stuck in your womb the day you bore me,
" If only our lives had come to an end,
" If only we had died together,
" For you gave me a city whose walls are destroyed!
" Its people are the beasts, their god is who hunts them down.
" He it is whose net is right-meshed: those engaged cannot slip through but die a violent death"
'He who begot a son, saying,
"This is my son, when I have reared him, he will requite my pains."
'I will put that son to death, his father must bury him,
'Afterwards I will put that father to death, but he will have none to bury
him.

'He who built a house saying

"This is my house, I built it for myself, I shall spend my leisure in it,

"On the day fate claims me, I shall fall asleep inside".

'I will put him to death and wreck his home,

'Afterwards though it be wreckage, I will give it to another'.

"O warrior Erra, you have put the righteous man to death,

"You have put the unrighteous man to death,

"He who sinned against you, you put him to death,

"He who did not sin against you, you put him to death,

"The high priest, assiduous with divine offerings, you put to death,

"The functionary who served the king you put to death,

"The old man on the doorstep you put to death,

"The young girls in the bedrooms you put to death,

"Even then you found no appeasement whatsoever!

"Even then when you told yourself, 'They hold me in contempt!'

"Even then you said to yourself, O warrior Erra,

'I will strike down the mighty, I will terrorize the weak,

'I will kill the commander, I will scatter the troops,

'I will wreck the temple's sacred chamber, the rampart's battlement, the pride of the city I will destroy!

'I will tear out the mooring pole so the ship drifts away,

'I will smash the rudder so she cannot reach the shore,

'I will pluck out the mast, I will rip out the rigging.

'I will make breasts go dry so babies cannot thrive,

'I will block up springs so that even little channels can bring no life-sustaining water,

'I will make hell shake and heaven tremble,

'I will make the planets shed their splendor, I will wrench out the stars from the sky,

'I will hack the tree's roots, so its branches cannot burgeon,

'I will wreck the wall's foundation so its top tumbles,

'I will approach the dwelling of the king of the gods, that no direction be forthcoming."

The warrior Erra heard him.

The speech that Ishum made pleased him like finest oil.

Thus spoke the warrior Erra.

"The Sealand, the Sealand, Subartu Subartu, Assyrian Assyrian,

"Elamite Elamite, Kassite Kassite,

"Sutean Sutean, Gutian Gutian,

"Lullubaeon Lullubaeon, land land, city city,

"House house, man man, brother brother must not spare one another, let them kill each other!

Then, afterwards, let the Akkadian arise to slay them all, to rule them, everyone."

The warrior Erra said these words to Ishum, his vanguard:

"Go, Ishum, the matter you spoke of, do as you wish".

Ishum set out for the mountain Hehe, the homeland of the Suteans.
The Seven, warriors unrivalled, fell in behind him.
When the warriors reached the mountain Hehe, he raised his hand, he destroyed the mountain,
He reckoned the mountain Hehe as level ground, he cut away the trunks of the cedar forest,
The thicket looked as if the deluge had passed over,
He laid waste cities and turned them into open spaces,
He obliterated mountains and slew their wild life,
He convulsed the sea and destroyed its increase
He brought the stillness of death upon swamp and thicket, burning like fire,
He cursed the wildlife and returned to clay.

TABLET V

After Erra was calmed and took up his own abode,
All the gods were gazing at his face,
All the Igigi-gods and the Anunna-gods stood in awe,
Erra made ready to speak, saying to all the gods:
“Quiet, all of you learn what I have to say!
“No doubt I intended evil in the bygone lapse,
“I was angry and wanted to lay waste the people.
“Like a hireling, I took the lead ram from the flock,
“Like one who did not plant an orchard, I was quick to cut it down,
“Like a scorcher of the earth, I slew indiscriminately good and evil.
“One would not snatch a carcass from the jaws of a ravaging lion,
“So too no one can reason where one is in a frenzy.
“Were it not for Ishum, my vanguard, what might have happened?
“Where would your provider be, where your high priest?
“Where your food offering? You would smell no incense”.

Ishum made ready to speak, saying to the warrior Erra these words:
“Quiet, warrior, hear what I have to say,
“No doubt this is true, now, calm down, let us serve you!
“At a time you are angry, where is he who can face you?”

When Erra heard this, his face beamed, like radiant daylight his features glowed.
He entered E-meslam and took up his abode,
He called Ishum to tell him the sign, to give instructions concerning the scattered peoples of Akkad,
“Let the people of the country, who had dwindled, become numerous again,
“Let short and tall alike traverse its paths,
“Let weak Akkadians fell mighty Suteans,
“Let one drive off seven like sheep.
“You shall make his cities into ruins and his highlands into open ground.
“You shall take massive booty from them, and put it in Shuanna,

"You shall reconcile the angry gods with their own abodes,

"You shall make gods of livestock, and grain descend once more to the land.

"You shall make mountain deliver its yield, sea its produce,

"You shall make the ruined fields deliver produce

"Let the governors of all cities haul their massive tribute into Shuanna,

"Let the ruined temples lift their heads like the rays of the sun,

"Let the governors of all cities make the provider for Esagila and Babylon their lord."

Praise to the great lord Nergal and warrior Ishum for years without number!

How it came to pass that Erra grew angry and set out to lay waste the lands and destroy their peoples,

But Ishum, his counsellor calmed him and left a remnant,

The composer of its text was Kabit-ilani-Marduk, of the family Dabibi.

He revealed it at night, and just as he (the god?) had discoursed it while Kabit was coming awake, he, Kabit-ilani-Marduk, omitted nothing at all.

Not one line did he add.

When Erra heard it he approved, what pertained to Ishum his vanguard, satisfied him.

All the gods praised this poem, then the warrior Erra spoke thus:

"In the sanctuary of the god who honors this poem, may abundance accumulate!

"But let the one who neglects it never smell incense.

"Let the king who extols my name rule the world,

"Let the prince who discourses the praise of my valor have no rival,

"Let the singer who chants it not die from pestilence,

"But his performance be pleasing to king and prince

"The scribe who masters it shall be spared in the enemy country and honored in his own land.

"In the sanctum of the learned, where they shall constantly invoke my name, I shall grant them understanding

"The house in which this tablet is placed, though Erra be angry and the Seven murderous,

"The sword of pestilence shall not approach it, safety abides upon it.

"Let this poem stand forever, let it endure till eternity.

"Let all lands hear it and praise my valor,

"Let all inhabitants witness and extol my name,"