

Chapter 5

Religion



Myth of Ea and Ninmah

- 1) What was the purpose of this myth?
- 2) What can we conclude about Mesopotamians from this myth?

Creation of the World

Out of the **deep** (Apsu) came the first gods (among them): **Anu, Ea, Tiamat**. Tiamat (**Universe Mather**) was a composite creature: part serpent and part bird. She was influential over some of the gods, and held the **Tablet of Fate**. The gods **fought with one another** and Tiamat created monsters to fight on her behalf. **Ea destroyed the Apsu with an incantation**. To **Kingu**, Tiamat of her creations, **she gave the Tablet of Fate**. Anu tried and failed to stop Kingu, so **Marduk**, Ea's son, volunteered to take up the struggle. The council called him their champion and bestowed upon him all of their powers: then a scepter and a throne. Marduk mounted a storm against Tiamat **with the four winds, crushed Tiamat and tore her into two parts**: one part became the **dome of heaven**, and the other an **abode for Ea**. took the Tablet of Fate. Then he set about **regulating the constellations and creating temples of the Gods**. (Anu-sky, Bel-Earth, Ea-the deep). **Ziggurat**: Step pyramid form temple for each city had its own god to honor.

Mesopotamian Gods

Mesopotamians marveled at what they could not explain

The sun (or Utu/Shamash)

They wrote “songs of praise” at the sun

They were more than human (seemed to touch “everything”)

Polytheists: belief in multiple or many gods

(chart on page 46 containing name of gods and what they relate to)

Each god controlled some part of universe

Helped Mesopotamians understand the good and the bad around them



Mesopotamian Gods

- God of “Adad” created rainstorms (rare in Mesopotamian

He “fought” against Shamash the sun god

Described as a “warrior god”

- God of “Ishtar” was the goddess of love

Sumerian name: Inanna which means “Lady of heaven”

All gods part of complicated family tree (related to one another and demonstrated emotions like fear, jealousy, and anger as humans often do)

Mesopotamian Gods

- Greatest of the gods: Enlil. He was their leader
- God of “Ea” was the kindest of the gods and the god of fresh, sweet water

There was once a time of no gods, no earth, and no sky

- God of “Anu” one of the first gods, name means “heaven”

He separated earth from the sky, then built homes for themselves, created the heavens. All gods fed and served Enlil and their daily routines consisted of human-like tasks



Myth of Atrahasis (17th century BCE)

Created humankind to “serve” Enlil and do the gods' tasks for them after the gods and goddesses had “ganged up” on Enlil (God of Ea saved the day) purpose was to feed, clothe, and shelter the gods

Gods and goddesses close by Earth a big, flat circle w/ the Tigris and Euphrates running through the middle sea on both sides (Mediterranean and Persian Gulf connected)

World = 500 miles across. Kings called themselves kings “of the four rims of the universe” due to this belief Were they foolish to believe these things?